

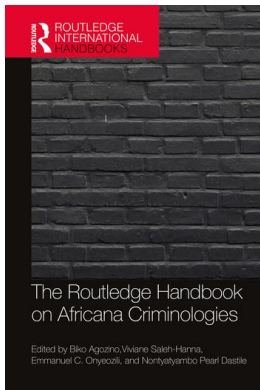
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GUNBOAT CRIMINOLOGY IN THE HISTORY OF PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT

Nigeria and Democratic Republic
of Congo examples

Emmanuel C. Onyeozili

Introduction

Gunboat criminology discusses how the oppressive and exploitative nature of European colonial and control policies permeated and corroded the African cultural, political, and socio-economic space, resulting in stunted growth and under development of Africa. The evidential aftermath of such systemic entrapment encapsulated in post-colonial Western-engineered repetitive coup d'états and endemic internecine civil wars persists in all African post-colonial "Bantustans" called independent African countries. The evidence is more pronounced in the African countries like Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo, endowed with rich natural and mineral resources like liquid gold and similarly precious stones, which accruing revenue would have helped lift Africa out of colonial-induced poverty. Evidence abounds, as with impact of the transatlantic slave trade, the implication of the U.S. and the UN in the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in Congo, and the British conquest and colonization of Nigeria. Such are typical examples of Western conspiracy to undercut African Renaissance; the rebirth of colonialism through neocolonialism; and perpetuation of impoverishment, which holds Africa's development in check, vis à vis the diaspora.

Colonialism (synonymous with imperialism) is a practice of domination that involves the subjugation of one people to another either through settlement, sovereignty, or indirect mechanisms of control geared towards the political and economic exploitation of the colonized (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2017). The origin of colonialism in Africa is traced to the 15th-century voyages of discovery spearheaded by the Portuguese under Prince Henry the Navigator and, later, the

Spaniards. The voyages of exploration led to the circumnavigation of Africa and, later, the African colonization process.

In the case of Africa, its fate was sealed at the 1884 Bismarckian Berlin African Conference, where the scrambling European nations gathered like vultures to carve up Africa in a forum where no African was invited to the partitioning table. Gunboat criminology has thus been used to characterize this organized usurpation and truncated relationship between the precolonial European interlopers and the Indigenous Africans dating back to 1884. The resulting artificial boundaries and one-directional relationship marked a devastating epoch in the history of Africa, when the European colonial powers used intimidation, threat, and brute force to impose their economic and personal will on the African people. It was an era immediately preceding colonization and extending to the post-colonial era. The intervening events encompass a plethora of complex dynamics involving colonization, African consciousness, decolonization, neocolonialism, and the problems of nation building. It also marked the death of the African Renaissance.

Historical background

The 15th century marked the first well-authenticated visits by Europeans to the African coasts. In the voyages financed by the great Prince Henry “the Navigator,” the Portuguese first captured Ceuta in 1415. They later reached the coast of Senegal, then Gambia, where they captured some slaves whom they took to Portugal (Beazley, 1894; Sanceau, 1947). In 1482, they reached the Gold Coast (modern Ghana), where they established a fort, São Jorge da Mina (now called Elmina Castle) (Beazley, 1894; Omer-Cooper, 1986). Three years later, in 1485, John Affonso d’Aveiro arrived in Nigeria and visited the *Oba* (king) of Benin City, and, by the accounts of Burns (1972), and Egharevba (1960), this marked the first European visit to a Nigerian king. The Portuguese later followed up and circumnavigated Africa.

Burns (1972) and Omer-Cooper (1986) suggest that in coming to Africa, the Portuguese were inspired by a mixture of economic, military, and religious motives. Economically the Portuguese wanted to discover a separate access route of their own to the gold trade of West Africa that would not pass through the territory of the Maghreb Muslims. They further anticipated this would yield for them a sea route to India for the rich trade in Indian spices.

Militarily, the Portuguese hoped to find the legendary Christian king Prester John, who would help them attack the Maghreb Muslims. Religiously and, to a lesser extent, militarily, they sought to convert Africans to Christianity and to develop alliances with African kings. These alliances, they hoped, would give them a trade advantage and strengthen their hand against the Muslims who dominated the route (Burns, 1972; Omer-Cooper, 1986).

Upon arrival in Nigeria, the earliest visiting Portuguese established a cordial relationship between the king of Benin and the king of Portugal. Portuguese missionaries were sent to “sow the seeds” of Christianity, and King John II (1481–1495) of Portugal opened a friendly correspondence with the king of Benin. Churches and monasteries were established to boost the new faith in Benin, and even the king of

Benin, who reigned in 1553, was purported to have been able to speak Portuguese, which he had learned as a little child (Burns, 1972; Egharevba, 1960).

At this point, the relationship between the Portuguese and the Benin Empire was characterized by equality and mutual respect, and royal gifts were exchanged between the kings (Egharevba, 1960). It is equally significant to note that, at first, the Portuguese who visited West Africa were mainly interested in the gold trade, although they also wanted slaves to sell in Portugal, where there was a great shortage of labor. In Benin, the relationship was simply associated with the trade in goods, spreading the new religion, and friendship.

Relationship-wise, there was mutual respect between Benin and Portugal, which admired the king of Benin. This mutual trust and respect was further illustrated in the writing of Burns: “[B]ut at Benin, which was within easy reach of the sea by means of a navigable river, there existed an organized kingdom ruled over by a monarch powerful enough to protect those whom he favoured” (1972:66). These accolades and encomiums will, as we shall soon see, contrast markedly with the opinions and remarks of the British, whose contact with Nigeria began with the dawn of the 16th century, from when the history of Nigeria, and indeed that of the whole of Africa, became a tale of terror and savages “addicted to cannibalism” (Burns, 1972:59).

Role of the British – the Nigerian example

Nearly seven decades after the initial Portuguese visit, the first English ships reached the Benin River in 1553 (Burns, 1972; Ryder, 1969). This fleet of three ships was commanded by Captain Windham and was piloted by an experienced Portuguese seaman, Penteadó. This landing marked the beginning of a relationship that would culminate in the colonization of Nigeria by the British (Burns, 1972; Egharevba, 1960; Ryder, 1969).

Anchored at Ughoton port on the Benin River, the English merchants went over to the city of Benin, where they were brought before the *Oba*. Ryder (1969) indicated that “Penteadó and the English merchants knelt before the *Oba* who told them to rise and asked why they had come to his country” (p. 77). It is important to observe that kneeling before the *Oba* as a form of salutation indicated the level of reverence in which the Portuguese and the English merchants held the *Oba* as the monarch of the empire of Great Benin. It was an acknowledgement that they were visiting his territory and thus subject to his authority.

Oba Orhogbua (c. 1550–1578), who spoke fluent Portuguese, then negotiated trade terms with the British merchants through Penteadó, who acted as interpreter (Egharevba, 1960). The trade agreement was that Benin pepper would be exchanged for unspecified British goods. Although 100 of the 140 merchants who visited Benin on this trip (including Captain Wyndham and Penteadó) died of either malaria or other sickness, the profits and prospects were so attractive that another fleet of five vessels (Burns, 1972; Ryder, 1969) sailed for the Guinea in the following year. This time, however, they visited Costa da Mina and (thanks to malaria) carefully avoided Benin for fear of death.

The next visit to Benin by the British was in 1588 under the captainship of James Welsh. After a two-month stay, the merchants traded their goods for a cargo of

pepper, elephant tusks, curiously woven cloth made of cotton wool, and barrels of palm oil (Burns, 1972; Ryder, 1969). In spite of the death toll that befell the crew, the desire for profit brought Welsh back in 1591 (Burns, 1972; Egharevba, 1960; Ryder, 1969). For trade, the British merchants exchanged their goods for 589 sacks of pepper, 150 elephant tusks, 32 barrels of palm oil, and woven cotton wool cloth and that made of the bark of palm trees (Burns, 1972; Ryder 1969).

Onyeozili (1998, 2004) conveyed three points of great significance in our treatment of early British contact with Nigeria (Benin Kingdom). The first is that the British merchants treated the *Oba* with marked reverence as a king of an empire in his own right. Second, the trade relationship between the *Oba* and the early Portuguese, and later with the British merchants, was conducted on equal terms and with mutual respect. Finally, the *Oba* of Benin dictated the exchange rate at which this trade was carried out, and the British were satisfied as exemplified in their eagerness to return in spite of the high death tolls on the British personnel. At no point during the early-contact period of this relationship were Africans treated as second-class citizens.

The European slave trade (European social violence), 1500–1850s

The history of European gunboat diplomacy and the “rape” of Africa would not be complete without a discussion of the role the slave trade played in the history of Africa of the period. The author wishes the reader to understand the term *slave trade* to mean European social violence on Africans (as used in Rodney [1972:104]). In discussing the first European contact with West Africa, it was mentioned that the Portuguese did capture some natives whom they took home as slaves. Initially, Prince Henry the Navigator had hoped to Christianize and educate these captives and send them back to Africa to act as missionaries and as a buffer to stem the fast pace of the growth of Islam in the region (Beazley, 1894). With the passage of time, this policy was dropped, and their labor was diverted to meet the agricultural and domestic needs of Portugal (Omer-Cooper, 1986).

Omer-Cooper (1986) noted that the slave trade became a massive affair upon the development of sugar plantations in São Tomé and later in Brazil and the West Indies. This development, accordingly, “created an almost unlimited demand for labor” (p. 30). The Portuguese, the Dutch, the Danes, the French, and the British then transported millions of Africans across the Atlantic. This was the unintended consequence of Antam Gonsalvez’s action in taking home the first slaves from Africa in 1441 (Beazley, 1894). The balance of trade thereafter would be tilted forever in favor of the Europeans.

Three major reasons are advanced as precipitating the slave trade. The first was Henry the Navigator’s idea of converting Africans to Christianity as part of his offensive against Islam. Second came the realization that these initial slaves were useful as farmhands in the underpopulated areas of Portugal. Finally, the discovery of America and the establishment of Spanish colonies in the Americas and in the West Indies led to the realization that Africans were better workers than the native Indians who worked in the Spanish mines and plantations in the West Indies (Burns, 1972).

By 1650, slaves had become West Africa's major export commodity (Burns, 1972; Omer-Cooper, 1986).

At the beginning, the Portuguese enjoyed a monopoly on the slave trade because the Papal Bull dividing the world prevented Spain and other nations from going to Africa for slaves. The Reformation, however, weakened the Papal Bull and allowed the entry of other European merchants into the lucrative African trade in slaves. The 16th century, therefore, marked the beginning of an epoch that culminated in the greatest crime in all human history – transatlantic slavery.

The involvement of the British in the slave trade did not begin until 1562 when the infamous John Hawkins (the first Englishman to engage in trafficking) took 300 slaves from Sierra Leone to Haiti. The initial profit was so immense that the following year, Hawkins easily obtained financing from Queen Elizabeth I for another trip to Africa. He was given command of a squadron of seven ships (the flagship of which was named *Jesus*) to sail to Africa and then carry slaves to the West Indies (Burns, 1972).

The British entry into the slave trading business opened the floodgate of competition among the British and other European merchants with its concomitant violence. It also marked the beginning of three centuries of agony for the unfortunate Africans, to the eternal shame of Europe, especially Britain. As Burns (1972) argued, the inherent greed, avarice, and malicious tendencies of the British were unleashed by the granting of charters to English companies by King James I beginning in 1618.

Armed with King James's charters, various English companies arrived West Africa. They developed various trading forts beginning from the mouth of River Gambia, the first of which was named Fort James in honor of the king of slave dealers, King James I of England. In a blink, the British had virtually edged out all competing European powers by the close of the 17th century in its mad scramble for a monopoly on the trade in slaves from Africa to the Spanish colonies in the West Indies.

The incivility of the British, along with their monopolistic and imperialist tendencies, were further dramatized in the 1712 Treaty of Utrecht, whereby Britain secured a 30-year monopoly of the slave trade to the Spanish colonies, giving it a leading role in world slave traffic (Burns, 1972). Omer-Cooper (1986) notes that the British did not start the slave trade. In fact, there had always been a slave trade with the Arabs in parts of Africa, and European slaves had long been bought and sold in North Africa. However, he observed that “the trade across the Atlantic was to eclipse in scale anything of the kind that had happened before” (p. 29).

The factors that sustained and heightened the immoral traffic in human beings across the Atlantic were the great impetus given to the trade by the king of England and the hypocrisy of the Protestant churches. The royal charters aside, a synod of Protestant churches held in France in the year 1637 issued a declaration stating that “slavery was not condemned ‘in the Word of God’ and was of the right of nations” (Spears, 1907:40). The Archbishop of Canterbury was a member of this synod and raised no objections.

In 1772, Justice Mansfield reached a landmark decision in favor of Granville Sharp, who had gone to court to protect the freedom of James Somersett, a runaway slave. In his ruling, Mansfield declared that “as soon as any slave sets his foot on English ground, he becomes free” (Burns, 1972:76). In spite of this ruling in 1772, a proposed

resolution to the effect that “the slave trade is contrary to the laws of God and the rights of men” failed in the British Parliament in 1776 (Burns, 1972:76), and 12 other such resolutions presented by William Wilberforce in 1778 were lost by large parliamentary majorities (Burns, 1972; Durant and Durant, 1975).

Despite the efforts of Wilberforce and other dissidents, England was now the leader in slave traffic across the Atlantic. Durant and Durant (1975) observed that in 1790 alone, British vessels transported 38,000 slaves to America; French ships, 20,000; Portuguese, 10,000; Dutch, 4,000; and Danish, 2,000, and “each nation contributed according to its ability in what was probably the most criminal action in history” (p. 368). From Liverpool and Bristol, the British ships carried liquor, firearms, cotton goods, and diverse trinkets to the slave coast of Africa where they exchanged their cargo for Negroes, who were then taken to the West Indies and the British southern colonies in North America.

In 1781, a shortage of drinking water occurred aboard the British slave ship the *Zong* on a voyage across the Atlantic. The ship’s captain callously calculated that since every slave on board was insured, a slave might be worth more dead than alive. If the slaves died a natural death (which presumably included death from thirst), the loss would fall on the owners, but if they were thrown overboard, the loss would be covered by insurance. He chose the latter course and cast 132 slaves into the sea to drown. The British courts (in spite of arguments that the captain of the *Zong* should be prosecuted for murder) compelled the underwriter to pay the owners 30 pounds sterling for each of the 132 slaves lost because the “blacks were property” (Burns, 1972:73; Durant and Durant, 1975:130–131; Williams, 1944:46), and their lives did not matter.

On the continent of Africa, the slave trade led to a loss of about five generations of able-bodied men and the consequent depopulation of the continent. Omer-Cooper (1986) noted that the “colossal business in human beings had terrible and widespread effects on the development of African societies, making *internecine* wars more profitable” (p. 30, emphasis added). Constant outbreaks of tribal wars arose to satisfy the insatiable appetites of African kings in their royal hunt for war prisoners. Even years after its abolition, the slave trade left the continent a legacy of another century of wars and rumors of war, and the enmity and animosity it generated persisted between different African societies (Rodney, 1972).

That this human debasement and audacious immorality of the European slave merchants were sponsored by their various “civilized” governments and “religious” bishops qualified it as an immortal sin. Burns (1972) wrote of Captain Crow, who indicated that he had at least on two occasions received government rewards of £100 as master of ship “who landed their human cargoes in good condition and without undue number of deaths on the voyage” (pp. 104–105). The proceeds from the African tragedy, of course, paid for the “campaigns of pride” between the European nations who were at war during the period. To date, argued Crowder (1968), it is ridiculous and beyond comprehension that despite the wars between these nations, the merchants still found a common ground to agree on the slave trade.

The topic of this research does not center on the slave trade. This author has, however, delved into the subject as a foundational step towards helping the reader

understand the British involvement in the planning and promotion of this horrendous trade. It is on the strength of this involvement that one can understand the reluctance and dilemma of the African and his initial failure to understand the British “chameleon” theory regarding the slave trade – a theory of financing the slave trade one day and sending Christian missionaries to preach against its horrors the next.

The Industrial Revolution

The term *Industrial Revolution* conveys the notion of an epoch that culminated in “a major discontinuity in the process of industrialization during which the British economy was launched irreversibly into ‘self-sustained growth’ within a couple of decades (1783–1802)” (Crowder (1968), Deane, 1996:14–15), to use economics parlance. Some authorities, including Deane (1996), however, have argued that the cataclysm that precipitated the economic shift in 18th-century England was like a forest fire that had been in the making for many decades. The event should therefore be seen as a shift in economic history and not a revolution. Like Beales (1958), however, others may beg to differ. According to Beales:

It may be true that each particular aspect of that change, when examined under the statistician’s microscope, shows a change not of kind but of degree. But the sum of these changes was overwhelming, and the process of adding sum to sum, like the process of compound interest, amounted to a revolution.

(1958:29)

To him, the Industrial Revolution replaced one social system or one civilization by another. A civilization “based on the plough and the pasture perished – in its place stood a new order, resting, perhaps dangerously, on coal, iron and imported textile materials” (p. 30).

The Industrial Revolution has been defined as the application of science to industry and society. That the Industrial Revolution is seen as a historically unique breakthrough in an evolutionary process of technological change by one school of thought, and that it is seen as a discrete event occurring in a brief and sharply demarcated time span by another school of thought is not the issue. What is important is that its effect was so profound that put in another form, we could say that the changes occasioned by the Industrial Revolution would eclipse all other changes in history put together (Beales, 1958; Deane, 1996). The impact was the quicker conversion of raw materials into manufactured goods. This, in turn, implied greater need for raw materials to meet the machinery needs of the newfound industries.

The reason for mentioning the Industrial Revolution and its attendant effects is twofold (Onyeozili, 1998). First, the Industrial Revolution was strongly affected by the slave trade, both directly and indirectly, because it was grounded on the production surplus of slave labor. Second, this author wishes to establish the obvious linkages between the European slave trade, the Industrial Revolution, social control (gunboat

policy), political subjugation, and the economic exploitation of Africa. This effort is made in spite of the deliberate failure of all European authors to acknowledge the critical role played by African slave labor in stimulating the Industrial Revolution.

The previous section of this work touched on the European slave trade. Most of the slaves were shipped to Haiti, the West Indies, the U.S., Guyana, Jamaica, and, of course, to England and other British colonies. It is on record (Rodney, 1972) that the African trade led to the rise of European seaport towns, notably Bristol, Liverpool, Nantes, Bordeaux, and Seville. Again, direct and indirect connection with these ports led to the rise of various European manufacturing centers.

Evidence abounds (Williams, 1944) to show that the increase in the slave trade was synonymous with the rise of the big English cities like Liverpool. The wealth associated with the trade was so relevant to the British economy and politics that its abolition was not under consideration, at least not in the 18th century. Williams (1944) contended that “The age which had seen the mortality among indentured servants saw no reason for squeamishness about the mortality among slaves” (p. 34). Since the exploitation of slaves on plantations did not differ fundamentally from the exploitation of the feudal peasant or the treatment of the poor in European cities, the proponents of free trade in slaves put pressure on their parliamentary representatives to ensure that no restrictions whatsoever be considered in Parliament concerning the slave trade.

This author does not wish to nit-pick concerning the hypocrisy of the Church, the Parliament, or the British merchants. The author also does not have any problems with the duplicity of the British monarchy. The academic tragedy, Onyeozili (1998) argues, is the hypocrisy of European authors and historians, who have persistently refused to give recognition to the contribution of Africa to the wheels of the Industrial Revolution and the subsequent technological advancement of the West. The point here is that the wealth and advancement of Europe were anchored on the backs and in the sweat and blood of the African slaves. Any less credit would be uncivilized in the 21st century.

Deane (1996) evaluated the Industrial Revolution from political, financial, economic, demographic, and agrarian standpoints, all based on British industry. In further encomiums, she contended that:

The most distinctive feature of British agriculture’s role in the development of the first Industrial Revolution stemmed from its ability to meet all or most of the food needs of a fast-growing and urbanizing population using a steadily diminishing proportion of the national workforce.

(p. 31)

While the logic of this argument is not flawed in any way, Onyeozili (1998) posits that the thesis is flawed in the sense that the agrarian buoyancy was directly linked to slave labor, which Deane did not in any manner or form acknowledge. It is this linkage that ties the Industrial Revolution to social violence-related events in Africa at all levels of analysis.

The British conquest of Nigeria (gunboat diplomacy)

In the preceding section, an attempt was made to establish a linkage between the Industrial Revolution and the European slave trade. In the same manner in which African slave labor powered British technological ascendancy, so did the Industrial Revolution precipitate the desire for raw materials to feed the industries. The British who had traded in Africa were, of course, quite aware of the availability of the desired raw materials (vegetable oil, rubber, indigo, cotton, ivory, gold, timber, etc.) in Africa. In the past, these materials were formally purchased by exchanging British manufactured goods for them (Burns 1972; Omer-Cooper, 1986).

Naturally, therefore, Britain looked to Africa for the procurement (looting) of the desired raw materials. To do this more effectively, a stop had to be put to the European kidnapping of Africans in order to encourage alternative modes of production. It was, therefore, no accident that the 18th century, which saw the peak of industrialization in Europe, also witnessed Justice Mansfield's decision in favor of Granville Sharp. Based on this development and contrary to established opinions, it is argued that Justice Mansfield's decision of 1772, the Imperial Acts of 1807 and 1833 abolishing the slave trade and slavery, and the Christian missionary activities dating from 1792 (Buxton, 1968; Durant and Durant, 1975; Omer-Cooper, 1986; Spears, 1907; Williams, 1944) were no accidents of history. Rather, the chain of events was a calculated grand design engineered and nurtured by the Europeans to loot Africa and extend their imperial designs, beginning with Nigeria.

Ikime (1977) stated that "the bulk of what is now Nigeria became British territory in the period between 1885 and 1914" (p. 3); 1885 was the year that the Niger Coast Protectorate was declared. This author would, however, side with Ohadike (1991) to contend that the British government conquered and colonized Nigeria after a series of military operations that began with the annexation of Lagos in 1852. Mountains of evidence abound to substantiate this argument.

It has already been stated that John Hawkins took his first 300 captives from Sierra Leone to Haiti in 1562. The following year, he was rewarded with the command of a squadron of seven ships, with the flagship named *Jesus*, to go to Africa and kidnap more captives. Of course, the Queen of England was the underwriter of the expedition, and the profit was destined for the royal treasury (Burns, 1972; Rodney, 1972). Although Queen Elizabeth was quoted as calling the slave trade "a detestable act . . . upon the undertakers," she knighted John Hawkins (Burns, 1972:69; Williams, 1944:39). Hawkins's only credentials for knighthood were, of course, the royal dividends from the slave trade. It was no accident that Hawkins chose as his coat of arms the representation of an African in chains (Rodney, 1972).

In a 1783 case, Justice Mansfield ruled that "the case of slaves was the same as if horses had been thrown overboard" and awarded the ship owners £30 in damages for each of the slaves who had been murdered (Williams, 1944:46). This ruling is the crux of the author's argument that Justice Mansfield's 1772 ruling was mere window dressing, designed to legitimize abolition and to advance the British economic and political agenda. The ruling also lent moral and legal legitimacy to the formation of missionary societies from 1792 onward to evangelize and "save the souls of Africans from idolatry and eternal damnation."

The logic of this line of argument is supported by other developments: namely, in spite of the 1772 ruling, and yet because of it, a resolution to the effect that “the slave trade is contrary to the laws of God and the rights of men” failed to pass in Parliament in 1776 (Burns, 1972:76; Crowder, 1978:98; Durant and Durant, 1975). Twelve other such resolutions presented by William Wilberforce in 1789 were lost by large majorities in British Parliament. Where was the morality of the British “courts of justice” or that of the Parliament dominated by royal robots? The author wishes, therefore, to say thanks but no thanks to both Mansfield and Granville Sharp for “saving” the freedom of poor James Somerset.

This author argues further that the hypocrisy of the British is also clearly exposed by their treatment of freed slaves. Sheltering under the guise that “the freed slaves could not fend for themselves effectively, with the result that they resorted to begging and thus became a nuisance in English society,” the British government hatched yet another of its shameless plots (Afigbo, 1986:56–57). In 1786, the Committee for Relieving the Black Poor was hurriedly formed. By February 1787, the British government had funded the repatriation of “freed slaves” to Sierra Leone, albeit to “eradicate the nuisance from English society.”

No English history book has been proud to report that by March 1788, only 130 of the 411 initial deportees who were dumped without adequate shelter and food supplies had survived. St. George’s Bay Company was also chartered to run the affairs of the new Sierra Leone settlement as another slave colony (Afigbo, 1986). Between 1788 and 1802, the British were rounding up the “liberated slaves” everywhere they could be found – England, Nova Scotia, Jamaica – and transporting them to Sierra Leone.

Further contradictions in the British exploitative policy that strengthen the author’s argument concerns the method of acquisition of the land to which the “liberated slaves” were deported. The basic question here is whether the permission of the paramount Temne king (Miambana) of the territory was obtained before establishing this new outpost. The obvious answer is an emphatic no! By this act of omission or commission, the lives of the new settlers were further endangered by drawing the wrath of the king (Afigbo, 1986). In addition, this was a violation of international law regarding the sovereignty of the Temne people. The bigger question, then, is: Why did the British not return these slaves to their native places of origin since most of these men and women knew where they came from?

At this point, it is safe to argue (Onyeozili, 1998) that, economically speaking, the unfortunate captives were grafted into Sierra Leone so as to be rendered permanently dependent and thus more readily compliant with future exploitation. By this time, the British had set their eyes on Africa as the prime source of much-desired industrial raw materials, and the raw materials product of Sierra Leone would therefore be subjected to British-dictated prices. Furthermore, only the desired raw material-related crops were initially introduced to those marooned folks.

For the record, it should be further noted that by arguing that Britain’s primary motive for abolishing the slave trade was purely economic, the author does not in any way mean to disparage the well-meaning humanitarian efforts of people like Granville Sharp, Thomas Clarkson, William Wilberforce, and later Olaudah Equiano (Gustavus Vasa). The author’s argument is intended only to reject categorically the

religious connotation attached to the British motive as hypocritical. Argument to this effect need not be repeated.

The main idea the author wishes to communicate is that these humanitarians were in such a minority and so underfunded logistically as to make nearly impossible any real impact on the monarchy, Parliament, or British public opinion. Their efforts were, therefore, only a voice in the wilderness. In fact, it was the turn of events (the Industrial Revolution) and the attendant consequences that lent the hand of providence. This providence was the dire need for African raw materials (cotton, rubber, vegetable oils, indigo, ivory, timber, and the like) (Afigbo, 1986). It forced Parliament (which was traditionally influenced by plantation merchants) to vote not only for the abolition of slavery, but also for the naval force to back up the resolutions.

Politically and strategically, the Mansfield decision encouraged the rise of abolitionist movements sponsored by various religious organizations. The political legitimacy conferred by the decision fulfilled the religious and moral desires of the Church, which hitherto had remained aloof from the unspeakable sacrilege of its involvement in the slave trade. The bishops could now condemn slavery; they organized missions to “evangelize” and propagate the Christian faith and, ultimately, encourage Africans to adopt a “legitimate trade.” It must be emphasized here that this was the same protestant Church whose bishops, along with the King of England, had in 1637 declared that slavery was not condemned “in the word of God” and was therefore the right of nations. It’s also the same protestant Church whose bishops and cardinals retained their slaves until they received £12,700 compensation in 1833 (Williams, 1944).

As a fillip to the preceding argument, Crowder (1978) argues that the sincerity of the British in abolition remained suspiciously circumspect considering that Britain was:

a nation that carried on public executions of children for petty theft right up till the middle of the century (19th) and instituted a system of child factory labor whose conditions, in many cases, were far worse than those for the slave on the sugar plantation.

(p. 99)

Dike (1956) also argues that although noneconomic forces may have played a role in abolitionist endeavors and European penetration into West Africa, “yet in a curious way [European] writers have tended to harp unduly on these external manifestations of a movement that was at root economic” (p. 14). The loss of America as a colony then had also cowed and diminished British pride and imperial integrity, Britain, therefore, had to hide under the cloak of the Mansfield decision to look elsewhere to boost her self-esteem without losing face. Africa particularly fit into the grand scheme because it promised to become a rich source of the much-needed industrial raw materials for European factories. Most importantly, the conquest and subjugation of Africa would be attained piecemeal in such a covert manner it would make Africa look like the perpetrator.

For Dike (1956), the contemporary movements connected with the changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution were a European, not a West African,

phenomenon. This was particularly true of events on the ideological plane. He thus remarked:

The nineteenth-century West African middleman was not only ignorant of the ideological battle raging in Europe on the question of abolition, but his ideas of life, of society, and of man belonged to a world poles apart from that in which the Benthamites argued and the Clapham sect preached.

(p. 12)

Be that as it may, and irrespective of the opinion of the African, British policymakers have resolved to uproot slavery at its source in Africa and, in its place, introduce “legitimate and free trade.” All that is left is a ruse to justify the deployment of brute force to achieve the British aim.

In the 19th century, southern Nigeria was particularly regarded by the British as the major source of palm oil and palm kernels – hence, the most valuable part of Africa, which held out promise for trade in other raw materials for British manufactured goods. The British, therefore, could not resist the temptation of acquiring such “a valuable territory by diplomacy, if possible, or by conquest if necessary” (Ohadike, 1991:1). As it mulled over the thought, the internal succession rivalry between members of Lagos royal family for the Lagos throne, which became vacant in 1841 following the sudden death of Oba Oluwole, provided the British the first much-needed opportunity.

The conquest (annexation) of southern Nigeria

The British conquest and colonization of Nigeria was a piecemeal process which took years of wars to accomplish. Although the different parts of Nigeria were conquered separately, the British pattern and approach were the same. First, they made the ruler look belligerent, cooked up trumped-up charges to the Home Office, and then utilized surprise and brute force to conquer the people. The ultimate goal was always to take over the control of trade from the indigenes and annex the territory.

European authors (Burns, 1972; Geary, 1965) and their cohorts have always painted, labelled, and stigmatized Lagos with the much-maligned name of “slave coast.” These European historians have therefore understood (by choice) and explained the British conquest of Lagos between 1851 and 1861 in terms of the British anti-slavery policy (Asiegbu, 1984). However, Asiegbu (1984), Ikime (1977), and Ajayi (1961) argued that the slave trade was only a speck in the catalogue of events that led to the assault on Lagos in 1851. On the contrary, Ikime (1977) convincingly established that Lagos was subjugated because “Britain wanted a share, perhaps the lion’s share, of the trade of Lagos from which she had been excluded for nearly 40 years” (p. 93).

With the death of Oba Oluwole, there was a tussle within the royal family (between Akitoye and Kosoko) as to who would succeed the *Oba*. The people of Lagos sided with and made Akitoye the king, and the defeated Kosoko and his supporters were forced into exile (Ikime, 1977). In a spirit of reconciliation and to reestablish trade and peace after the crises, Akitoye allowed Kosoko to return to Lagos in 1845. That

same year, Kosoko plotted and overthrew Akitoye from the throne of Lagos (Asiegbu, 1984; Ikime, 1977).

The overthrow and expulsion of Akitoye to Badagry, a neighboring kingdom, forced Akitoye's plea to the British to help restore him to the throne. Buoyed by the Christians on the coast of Badagry, he was persuaded to ask for British support by writing to Queen Victoria, pledging to help abolish the slave trade in Lagos. On the strength of these presentments, the Foreign Office urged Beecroft to visit Kosoko and sign a treaty for the abolition of the slave trade in Lagos (Burns, 1972; Ikime, 1977). With four British warships in attendance, in November 1851, Consul Beecroft visited Kosoko and urged him to sign the treaty for British protection, which he smartly refused. Kosoko claimed he had to consult with his chiefs and the King of Benin before he could sign anything on behalf of his kingdom.

Pressured further to sign the accord, Kosoko plainly intimated to Beecroft that "the friendship of England was not wanted" (Burns, 1972:122; Geary, 1965:26). Angered and rebuffed, Beecroft, in the quest to control Lagos trade, accused King Kosoko of "heinous" slave trading, returned to the warships, and ordered Commander Forbes to attack Lagos. After initial British failure, Kosoko was defeated on a second attempt, and Akitoye was restored to the throne of Lagos on New Year's Day 1852.

Akitoye was forced to sign an anti-slave treaty with accompanying clauses that reduced him to a mere puppet of the British. Less than ten years later, on August 6, 1861, Lagos was annexed and declared a British possession. The following year, Lagos was made a colony, and this effectively stripped the *Oba* of all judicial and administrative powers over his kingdom (Burns, 1972).

When it came to the South coastal trade, King Jaja of Opobo was accused of violating a treaty he had never signed and obstructing trade, tricked to a meeting on a pontoon, and deported to Ghana for refusing to sign away his authority as king of Opobo. As for Chief Nana of Itsekiri (Ebrohimi), he was accused of slave trading and obstruction of "free" trade. His Ebrohimi was attacked with gun boats and, like Jaja, he was also deported.

Similarly, in the Benin empire, following the fall of Bonny, King Jaja, and Chief Nana of Itsekiri, the British became overly anxious to exert a total monopoly of all trade in the newly created protectorates. It was this desire by the British merchants to secure a more favorable deal that would pit the British government against the *Oba* of Benin. In a manner characteristic of the British, the consul, the vice-consul, and the consul-general's offices began to send barrages of damaging and disparaging reports and lies about the *Oba* and his kingdom to the Foreign Office.

Following the refusal of the *Oba* to grant an audience in 1890, and later in 1895, to Vice-Consuls Annesley and Copeland Crawford of the Benin River District (of the Oil Rivers Protectorate), respectively, the British actively began considering a punitive expedition against Benin (Igbafe, 1979). As a prelude to war, Acting Consul-General Moor accused the *Oba* in 1895 of refusing all overtures for peace, of breaking article V of 1892 treaty (which the *Oba* had smartly refused to sign), and of egregious high-handedness. The killing of the new acting commissioner and Consul-General Phillips, who stubbornly ignored all entreaties by Itsekiri chiefs and entered Benin territory unannounced, provided the last straw to justify the long-planned invasion

of the Benin empire. The Benin soldiers probably thought that Phillips meant war, judging from the large train accompanying him.

The final British attack on Benin commenced on February 10, 1897, and ended on February 17. In the words of Asiegbu (1984), when the war was over, Oba Ovonramwen of Benin suffered deposition from his throne and deportation from his kingdom to allow British traders exploit the resources of the kingdom. He now joined the ranks of King Jaja of Opobo, Governor Nana of Itsekiri, and King Koko of Nembe-Brass, who were all deposed and deported for standing up for their rights over their kingdoms.

In Igboland, the British so-called Aro expedition of 1901 marked the zenith of British foolery in military adventurism, pursued partly for what Asiegbu (1984) considered an exercise in futility for much-needed war honors, promotion, or combat medals for military neophytes, called “commandoes.” In the case of Arochukwu, the sacking and burning of an already-deserted town was an act of British barbarity and plunder generated by a false and misconstrued belief that the Aros held the key to Igboland and that the subjugation of the Aros would be tantamount to the subjugation of the whole of Igboland (Ikime, 1977). They were wrong. The Aros were mere adroit middlemen in the coastal trade with the Europeans, and the destruction of their long juju did not make any dent on the complex Igbo way of life, nor did it free up much-needed trade for the Europeans. If anything, it made the process more complicated in the absence of the Aro middlemen.

The united widespread Aniocha Ekumeku uprising of 1904 proved the point. It also proved that the Igbo were not intimidated and were always ready to fight for their republican independence. Asiegbu (1984), Igbafe (1971), Ohadike (1991), and Anene (1966) attributed the revolt to the protectorate displacement of the local chiefs as the dominant class and force in their own society and replacing them with what Achebe (1959) referred to as social imbeciles and *efulefus* (dregs) of the society. By employing guerilla and scorched-earth policies, the Ekumeku gave the British a run for their money before they were eventually subjugated, but not before inflicting massive injury on British pride. That the British Colonial office sided with the British traders of the Royal Niger Company to dispossess the Africans of their culture and accumulated wealth in order to weaken and impoverish them testifies to the British gunboat diplomatic approach.

Conquest of Northern Nigeria

For Northern Nigeria, the precolonial history of the Nigerian peoples north of the Niger is unique in a way. With the exception of Bornu, they were all under the suzerainty of the Sokoto Caliphate. However, the French intervention in the affairs of the British part of Bornu had some implications for the British policy in the region. The French presence forced Lord Lugard to organize an expedition in 1901 led by Colonel Morland for the conquest and effective occupation of Bornu. Upon defeat, the British sought out the Emir – Abubakar Garbai – and asked him to accept a letter of appointment as Shehu of British Bornu. Garbai’s acceptance of this letter in 1902 effectively meant that Bornu had become a British territory. Then, in 1904, the king

was literally forced to move his base from Monguno to Kukawa to ensure British oversight.

Earlier in 1900, Frederick Lugard had declared as a British protectorate what used to be known as Northern Nigeria and began the piecemeal dismantling of the Sokoto Caliphate. He first took Kotangora, Bida, and Yola in 1901 (Adeleye, 1971; Ikime, 1977). In 1902, Bauchi and Zaria were added to the fold of conquered states (Adeleye, 1971). With these invasions, Lugard deposed the rulers and appointed his own emirs, an action tantamount to a declaration of war against the caliph who had invested those kings in the first place, according to existing custom. In 1903, Kano was subjugated, and Sokoto followed in 1903. The caliph, Attahiru I, hastily fled, apparently on a hejira to the east. With the fall of Sokoto, the conquest of the North and its annexation as British territory was complete.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is a part of the vast former Kongo Empire (1390–1891), which stretched from the southwest of DRC, to the northwest of Angola, to the south of the Republic of Congo and overlapped some parts of Gabon (Mavuanda, 2018). The kingdom was first explored and destabilized by the Portuguese, who arrived in Kongo in 1483 during the reign of King Manikongo, Nzinga a Nkuwu. The main interest of the Portuguese then was to secure able-bodied slaves to work in the sugar fields it had established in Sao Tome (off the west coast of Africa) in 1470, which eventually drained the Congo population.

At the 1885 Berlin conference, the Kongo empire, which had collapsed under the Portuguese human exploitation pressure, was divided into two (the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Congo) at the river Congo and shared between France and Belgium. The name Congo derives from the river separating the countries. Later in the late 19th century, its interior was opened up by the British-born explorer Henry Morton Stanley, commissioned by the infamous Belgian king, Leopold. The discovery of DRC's rich natural resources led Leopold to carve out of it a vast private empire, run as his personal estate (Snow, 2013a).

Fed by the alluvial deposits from the world's second-largest river (the Congo) and a benign climate, DRC is blessed with rich, fertile soil. Beneath the soil lie abundant natural deposits of manganese, coal, lead, zinc, tin, copper, gold, diamonds, cobalt, uranium, coltan (an essential material in cell phones), and oil. It is argued (Snow, 2013b) that the abundance of these mineral deposits makes DRC one of the world's richest countries. Additionally, it was the world's largest supplier of rubber at a time when bicycle and automobile tires and electrical insulation served as vital commodities in the West.

Soon after the Congo was ceded to Belgium as a colony under King Leopold II, many well-documented atrocities were perpetrated between 1885 to 1908 on the Congo Free State (today the Democratic Republic of the Congo) Indigenous population. The atrocities, documented by Christian missionaries working in the Congo, combined with epidemic disease, famine, and a falling birth rate contributed to a sharp decline in the Congolese population. This unfortunate development, when made known in the United Kingdom, Belgium, and the United States, aroused an

international campaign against the Congo Free State beginning in 1890. By 1908, international pressure forced the Belgian government to annex the Congo Free State to form the Belgian Congo. Belgium eliminated many of the systems responsible for the abuses, but not before it had generated permanent hatred for the Belgian occupation, leading to the demand for independence.

Soon after gaining independence from Belgium in 1960, the ex-colonial master, Belgium, colluded with the United States (CIA) (Congoconference, 2011), political opponents, and military apparatchik and assassinated its first elected prime minister, Patrice Lumumba, in January 1961 after less than four months in office. Lumumba's first crime was spearheading the Congolese march to independence, thereby dislodging the Belgian chokehold on the DRC economy. The second was the U.S. fear of communism and President Eisenhower's suspicion that he was drifting towards friendship with the Soviet Union in the Cold War era. The third was his "fierce" impromptu independence speech. which was termed unfriendly (as measured by colonial standard):

For this independence of the Congo, although being proclaimed today by agreement with Belgium, an amicable country, with which we are on equal terms, no Congolese worthy of the name will ever be able to forget that it was by fighting that it has been won, a day-to-day fight, an ardent and idealistic fight, a fight in which we were spared neither privation nor suffering, and for which we gave our strength and our blood. We are proud of this struggle, of tears, of fire, and of blood, to the depths of our being, for it was a noble and just struggle, and indispensable to put an end to the humiliating slavery which was imposed upon us by force.

(Lumumba, 1960)

The assassination of Lumumba by Belgian troops in connivance with Joseph Kasavubu, Mobutu Sese Seko, Moise Tshombe, and the CIA brought DRC back to its knees. The hope of independence was dashed as the only light on the horizon was nipped in the bud and snuffed out before it could shine. The muzzling of the lone voice (Lumumba) in the Congolese fight for political and economic freedom from the clutches of the Western stranglehold justifies the assertion of gunboat diplomacy, in which the African has no fighting chance.

Hence, with a Congolese brand of diplomacy, the Portuguese, then the Belgians, the West, Mobutu, and the present government all deliberately held DRC hostage. Its resources have become its worst undoing while the elite continue to focus on making money at the expense of the nation. While the proceeds of its resources funded, and continues to fund, the growth and development of the European and Western economies, the manufacture of Western nuclear bombs and high-tech cell phones, and their economic powerhouses, authentic owners of the wealth, the Black African Congolese, languish in abject poverty.

Exploited, poor, and economically enslaved (Lumumba, 1960), the DR Congo is kept at an infantile level of development that suits the rulers and exploitative mine owners. The state is always engulfed in Western-precipitated never-ending

internecine wars between rival groups for the control of the billions of dollars' worth of mineral deposits that have brought nothing but misery, tears, sorrow, and death to the very people who live on top of them. The only beneficiaries are a few Congolese elite fronted by the Western exploitative machinery.

Conclusion

This chapter argues that, from the get-go, the illusion behind colonialism was the Western belief that their culture and social institutions were the best in the world. They also believed that their African subjects were so primitive and backward that they could not benefit from the introduction of the "highly sophisticated" Western/European institutions amongst them (Afigbo, 1986). For example, Afigbo also argued that it was Britain's ardent belief that Africa should be introduced to her modern English system of government in a way that would not cause the African culture and society to break up completely.

This understanding and belief formed the basis of the European decision to "purify" African institutions and govern Africans through them. Since profit was the major goal behind European adventure in Africa, its government was not willing to invest its own resources in Africa. On the contrary, their whole aim was to exploit the economic resources of the continent.

An evaluation of the various incidents in the conquest of Nigeria generated some observations and raised salient issues. It is evident that the British played two roles in their chameleon theory approach during this period. First, Britain had resolved to colonize Nigeria, armed with paper treaties and the anointment of its claims at the 1884 Berlin West African Conference of the European nations. Second, and in pursuance of this policy, all British activities and involvement in local affairs were aimed at

- 1 Protecting all religious and commercial interests that would help advance the colonial agenda. One example is the charter given to the RNC to establish a police force, which was used to oppress and subjugate the populace in preparation for total colonization. Another instance is the use of missionaries to soften resistance by preaching deliverance and the Bible with one hand and looting and eroding the culture and wealth of the nation with the other.
- 2 Promoting and advancing imperial government and interests by use of force of conquest and destruction with no regard for the lives of women and children or property. This aspect was evidenced by concocting trumped-up charges against noncooperating Southern chiefs (e.g., King of Bonny, King Jaja, King Nana Olomu, Oba of Benin, etc.) and Northern Emirs to justify their replacement with stooges more amenable to British interests.

The events manifest British ignorance, total or feigned, of African customs and traditions in which, customarily (as in Eastern Nigeria), the towns were ruled by titled elders, and the qualifications for title-taking were honesty, truthfulness, and the ability to dispense justice without favoritism. In contrast, the British appointment of non-titled men and some slaves as native court chiefs diminished the offices and desecrated

custom. Naturally, no honorable member of the society would recognize the authority of chiefs who did not inherit the ancestral *ofò*, which was the only legitimate authority and linkage with the ancestors.

In the case of Congo, it was the Belgians under the direction of King Leopold who eventually annexed DRC as his personal estate. Beginning with the transatlantic slave trade and the Portuguese development of sugar plantations with slave labor in Sao Tome and, finally, with an eye on the vast economic and natural resources buried in the region, the Congo was vastly depopulated by slave hunts and plantation labor. The extreme exploitation brutally relegated it to the backwaters of the global economy. This was as its wealth and sweat was used in developing Europe while leaving Africa psychologically emaciated.

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