

## British, French, Belgian and Portuguese Models of Colonial Rule and Economic Development in Africa

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### ABSTRACT

Although the goals of the colonial powers of controlling the human and material resources of Africa were alike, their means of achieving those colonial goals and interests were different by virtue of their different approaches in social control, economic development and political integration. Despite achieving independence, many African countries still suffer from the remnants of colonialism in the form of neocolonialism – economic, social, language and cultural dependencies. Other contemporary conflicts African countries face in the post-colonial era include border disputes, disparate and unequal patterns of economic development, cultural and language differences resulting from colonial histories and experiences. This paper sets to narrate the history and evolution of European presence in Africa; analyze different and competing types or styles of colonial rules as well as patterns of development adopted by different European powers in their respective colonies in Africa; examine the British, French, Belgian and Portuguese types of rule in Africa and identify some of the major reasons why each colonial power adopted its own distinct form of policy.

**Keywords:** Berlin Conference, Race and Scramble for Africa, Partition of Africa, Bakassi Peninsula, Industrial Revolution, Slave Coast, Triangular Trade, Warrant Chiefs, Indirect Rule, Assimilation, Emancipation, Brazaville Conference, Poll Tax, Paternalism, Sabon Gari, Colonialism, Compulsory/ Forced labor.

### INTRODUCTION

Between the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the focus of European trade was slave trade. This resulted in the “triangular” or “Trans-Atlantic” slave trade in which slaves were purchased in West Africa, shipped to the cotton fields and coal mines in America. The produced cotton and other goods were then shipped back to Europe, then converted into textiles and shipped back to Africa to be used for exchange for more slaves. The arduous journey called the “middle passage” claimed many African lives. With the inception of the Industrial revolution in Europe between 1840 and 1870, the need for slave labor waned. The industrial revolution introduced technology - machine tools, steam-powered railways, boats and ships.

The colonial powers then sought strong footholds in order to introduce colonial-style governments; resettle and employ indigenous populations displaced by the industrial revolution. For example, the British government

introduced their nationals to work as District officers (DOs) who governed through “Warrant Chiefs” in Eastern Nigeria. Also, the colonial powers had the urge to establish new markets for finished surplus goods and mineral resources; and in return secured sources of raw materials such as timber, gold, rubber, cocoa, copper, nickel and palm oil.

There was also the economic reason on the part of the colonial states to provide the protection to the national multinationals companies that operated in Africa. In Nigeria and Ghana, Britain provided security and protection, as well as comparative advantage in overseas trade to its parent company the British Royal Niger Company. The fight to control the African resources and exclude other competitors was so intense among the colonial powers that it was dubbed the “scramble” and “Partition” of Africa.

The “cut throat” competition among European States including Britain, France, Germany,

Spain, Italy, Portugal and Belgium resulted in the convening of the Berlin Conference (1884 - 85) by then German Chancellor Bismarck. The conference presented the framework for dividing up Africa among European nations. The criteria used were that any country that first established presence and a form of government in any part would take control and possession of that area. As a result, almost every European nation had territorial possession (colonies) in parts of Africa. Each colonial power not only influenced the culture, language and education of its possession, it also introduced its type of rule/ government, social control, economic development and political integration. The European presence has lingering effects in contemporary Africa. It is the root cause of conflict among African States over international borders. For example, the Nigeria-Cameroonian conflict over Bakassi Peninsular and the Ethiopia-Somalia conflict over the Ogaden (1977-78). The purposes of this paper are to:

- Trace the history and evolution of European presence in Africa
- Analyze different types of colonial rules adopted by different European powers in their colonies in Africa
- Examine the British, French, Belgian and Portuguese types of colonial rule in Africa.
- Identify some of the reasons why each colonial power adopted its own distinct form of policy
- Identify factors responsible for variations in development patterns in Africa

### EUROPEAN CONQUEST AND AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE

The African slave trade is attributed to the history of European conquest and rule of Africa. This opened the gate for the colonial powers to exploit Africa's human and mineral resources. During the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Century the main focus of European trade was the slave trade in which the Portuguese and the Dutch were major participants. Hence, the "triangular" trade in which the European powers purchased African slaves in West Africa and shipped them as human cargo to Europe and America to work in the cotton fields and coal mines. The produced cotton was then shipped back to Europe where it was converted into raw material for textiles which subsequently was shipped to Africa to serve as exchange goods for more slave labor. This long and arduous journey called the "middle passage" claimed many West African lives. Most of these slaves hailed from the West

African Coastal countries and contiguous areas of Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra Leone dubbed the "slave Coast". It was not until March 25, 1807 that the British efforts in Parliament, designed to abolish the slave trade came to fruition with the passage of the Slave Trade Act.

### EUROPEAN SCRAMBLE AND PARTITION OF AFRICA

Often referred to as the "*race for Africa*," the European powers fought and struggled among themselves for the primary purpose of establishing their territorial claims and controls of Africa's huge mineral resources. The resource promise of Africa was informed by the accounts of early European explorers of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, such as David Livingstone who sailed along River Zambezi; Mongo Park who explored The River Niger and the hinterland. The explorers thus opened a trail for the presence of Christian missionaries who preached the bible, converted Africans to Christianity, condemned some aspects of traditional African worship, practices and customs and introduced western- style education. Their struggles at some time became chaotic, unhealthy and out of control to the extent of warranting some level of control. Hence the Berlin Colonial conference of 1884-85 was necessitated at the invitation of Otto Von Bismarck, the then Chancellor of Germany.

The goal of the conference was to lay down the framework and conditions by which the scramble for African territories and resources were to be enforced. As reflected in the treaty, the European powers agreed that any power claiming any piece of African territory must first occupy the said territory, establish a working government in it and then inform its competitors. It was strictly based on the principles espoused by the agreement that encouraged European powers – Britain, Portugal, Italy, France, Germany, Belgium, and Spain to partition the continent into their possessions, develop colonial rules, declared the major international waterways, such as Rivers Niger and Zaire free to all transportation as well as abolish slavery in states occupied by each colonial power. It is worth noting that this exercise was both foreign and an imposition on the African continent as no African chiefs were either invited or in attendance. It was at the conclusion of the meeting that agents of the European colonial powers began to stream into Africa to lay the ground work for an orderly transition into boundary demarcation and the

declaration of colonial possessions (colonies) for each participating power. The only territories that survived the colonial exercise were the territories of Liberia and Abyssinia (Ethiopia) respectively.

Soon, a new contour or map of Africa was introduced, with each colonial European power establishing its own type of colonial government and spheres of influence. A bird's eye view of the map of Africa shows that in Northern Africa, France controlled such countries as Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, while Italy controlled Libya and Britain controlled Egypt, and Spain exercised its influence and control over Spanish Sahara. With respect to the west African region, Britain took control of Nigeria, Gambia and Sierra Leone, while France controlled Cote D'ivoire (Former Ivory Coast), Mauritania, French Sudan (Now Mali), Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), Dahomey (now Republic of Benin), and Niger. Spain took possession of Spanish Sahara, while Portugal took possession of Cape Verde. As regards Central Africa, France controlled Chad and central Africa Republic, while Belgium controlled Tanzania and Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire).

While Spain took possession of the Island of Fernando Po, Portugal took over Sao Tome and Principe Islands. Burundi and Rwanda fell under the colonial grip of Belgium and English-Speaking Cameroon (Cameroon was divided between the French and English sections), Chad, Central Africa Republic and French Speaking Cameroon came under French rule. In East Africa, the story was no different. While Britain controlled Uganda, Zanzibar and Kenya, Germany controlled Tanzania (former Tanganyika). In terms of the northeastern region of Africa, while Britain controlled parts of Somaliland and Sudan, France took possession of part of Somaliland. Italy controlled Eritrea and a portion of Somaliland as well. Southern Africa saw Britain in control of South Africa, Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and Zambia. Portugal controlled Angola and Mozambique, while Germany controlled Namibia (Former South-West Africa) and France took over Madagascar (formerly known as the Malagasy Island territory).

### DIFFERING PATTERNS OF POLITICAL SYSTEMS AND DEVELOPMENTS

The European colonial powers adopted different approaches styles of governance through which they ruled their territorial possessions in Africa. The French instituted the policy of assimilation

designed to convert Africans in the territories to French citizens; the policy of self- government by the British which replaced traditional African chiefs with "headmen" and in some cases,, "warrant" chiefs constructed in a way capable of promoting self-rule by Africans while at the same time appointing some indigenous Africans as state officials doing the British bidding.

By not dismantling existing traditional African institutions, the British colonial administration put alid on the prospects of confrontation and protests. The quasi-autonomy enjoyed by Africans in the British territories turned out to have prepared African leaders such as Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana for early independence in Nigeria (October 1960) and Ghana (March 1957) respectively.

Under Belgium colonial rule of paternalism, Belgian multinational companies, the colonial administration and the Catholic Church became the channels of governance and control. With respect to Portuguese colonial rule in of assimilation and paternalism, its decline as a colonial power and circumstance as a poor state forced it into excessive and brutal exploitation of its African colonies.

Hence, in Africa, different patterns of political expression and freedoms emerged as well as varied degrees of development such as education of the indigenous populations and different modes of colonial resistance and struggles for independence of the colonies.

### FRENCH, BRITISH, PORTUGUESE AND BELGIAN COLONIAL POLITICS AND DEVELOPMENTS: A PRECURSOR

According to Zahorik, Jan (2019), every European power that had colonial possessions in Africa - France, Portugal, Britain or Belgium tried to develop its own administrative system, differed in her perception of Africans, yet their common tendencies was to look upon an African as an inferior being; and that this feeling of superiority of the European society was facilitated or given impetus by the technological leap in Europe.

The **French** colonial system was based on colonial rule and direct control over its colonies. This involved the creation of vast bureaucratic apparatus and involvement in Africa as the French embarked on what Zahorik called "the creation of an undisputed Francophone territory that would stretch from Senegal to the Red Sea and Indian Ocean". Soon the program of French

colonial policy became a form of cultural export and assimilation – the spread of French language and culture throughout its territories and possessions. According to Zahorik, Jan (2019), part of the French strategy was to educate ‘loyal’ African political elites so as to keep the continuity of French dominance in its colonies after World War II. To illustrate, the first Presidents of independent Francophone countries, such as President Leopold Sedar Senghor of Senegal, President of Ivory Coast (now) Cote d’Ivoire, Felix Houphouet-Boigny and President of Niger, HamaniDiori were not only friends of France, but rather spent a large portion of their lives – residing, schooling, training, working, and vacationing in Paris.

The French intent was to cultivate them through immersion, cooptation, socialization and acculturation. In the analysis of Zahorik, Jan (2019), the idea of the unification of Francophone colonies in Africa through language and cultural assimilation was designed to ward off these countries from unnecessary disintegration as were the experiences of the Portuguese and Belgian colonies during their struggles for independence. Hence, in search of a gradual and peaceful transition from colonial rule to independence, the Charles De Gaulle government was unwilling to allow any visible, overt emancipation of the colonial people because of fears of violent, revolutionary, quick and chaotic decolonization process possibly involving armed conflicts.

Examples are not far-fetched regarding how France pursued such goals. In 1958, the independence for Guinea was put to vote in a referendum organized by its colonial master France. Similarly, with regard to the independence for Algeria, France organized a plebiscite in its territory where indigenous people of Algeria voted to consider Algeria an integral part of France. These initiatives, argued Zahorik, Jan (2019), showed how worried and concerned France was of losing its power and prestige not to mention its economic and cultural consequences of its colonies. As Zahorik, Jan (2019:4), also argued, French colonial designs as regards “cultural imperialism” fell short of its goals and objectives in light of the fact that “only about 15% of the people of Francophone Africa speak French while the rest of the population gives preference to local and indigenous languages”. Further, during Post World War II, the French colonial policy in Africa evolved from “assimilation” to “French Union” (French

empire). Under this policy, the independent territories of France came under French umbrella or shield. This policy was a political entity created by the French Fourth Republic to replace the old French colonial system that existed between 1946 and 1958; and marked the formal end of the “indigenous” (indigène) status of French subjects in colonial areas. The French Union had five components, comprising Metropolitan France, which included French Algeria; ‘Old’ colonies of the French West Indies in the Caribbean; ‘New’ colonies, now overseas territories; Protectorates of French Indochina. However, it should be noted that the rulers of French Morocco and French Tunisia refused to become members and never became one; including United Nations Trust Territories, such as French Cameroons and French Togoland, successors of the League of Nations mandates.

The British developed in many of their colonial possessions or colonies, such as Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya the system of “indirect rule” where unlike the French, did not have the appetite or desire to assimilate indigenous Africans. Instead, the Brits allowed Africans many of their traditional institutions and cultures intact and to flourish on the reasoning that their main goal was more for “economic profit” than “cultural dominance”. As Zahorik, Jan (2019) well noted, “British or generally European colonialism owed much to great explorers and personalities such as Cecil Rhodes who established the basis of British imperialism in South Africa. Because of British eyes on economic gains and profit, Britain acquired and annexed Northern Rhodesia which was contiguous to Belgian Congo known as the “copper belt” because it was endowed with large deposits of copper and other metals including nickel. As Zahorik, Jan (2019: 5) further argued or asserted, Britain just like any other imperial power was more preoccupied, sensitive and concerned with proving her military and technological superiority over Africans knowing full well that any hegemonic or colonial power in Africa would eventually be confronted with resistance against any forms of economic and cultural oppression. Thus, the British became insensitive to the rich and vast cultures and histories of their colonial subjects, which they often portrayed as the primitive “other”.

The Portuguese colonial approach under the Salazarist regime or government incorporated its colonies because of Portugal’s economic backwardness. As Zahorik, Jan (2019) claimed,



Portugal did not show good economic figures and thus needed the natural resources from the colonies to prop up, boost and maintain its domestic economy. Hence, Portugal considered the colonies its “provinces” or extensions of its colonial or imperial territory. According to Zahorik, Jan (2019), Portugal’s colonial system was based on the theory of “social Darwinism” - which hypothesizes that Africans have nothing tangible to contribute to the development of society or civilization, and that consistent with this assumption, Portugal designed a 3-stage system of assimilation whose overarching goals were to:

- Destroy traditional African societies and cultures
- Infiltration and adulteration of African societies by Portuguese culture and
- Integration of detribalized Africans to Portuguese society

By so doing, the Portuguese were able to construct a hierarchical and unequal system in its territories in which the so-called “assimilates” could use certain privileges as opposed to native Africans (indigeneas) who were designated as second-class citizens. As Zahorik, Jan (2019) argued, for anyone to make the transition to the category or class of “assimilado” he or she would have to show competence, fluency or adequate knowledge of the Portuguese language and thus be certified as having proved principle of a “civilized lifestyle. Regardless, Portuguese control over indigenous African natural resources and its people and its resistance to peaceful decolonization of its territories never worked as numerous independence resistance and liberation movements with divergent political ideologies mushroomed as exemplified by its experiences in Southern Africa, particularly in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique respectively.

In Guinea-Bissau, President Luis Cabral became its first President after independence in September 1973. In Mozambique, Frelimo (Mozambique Liberation Front) won the multiparty elections held in Mozambique in 1994. Later, Joaquim Chissano became leader of Frelimo in 1986 after the death of Samora Machel and eventually became the first elected president of the country after independence in June 1975. For Angola, many splinter groups fighting for independence emerged prior to her independence in November 1975. The National Union for the Total Liberation of Angola (UNITA) was headed by Jonas Savimbi while

the National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA) was headed by Holden Roberto. Antonio Agostinho Neto headed the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) which was founded in 1956. After Neto’s death in September 1979 as the first President of Independent Angola, he was succeeded by Eduardo dos Santos who rules Angola as President from 1979 to 2017.

The Belgian colonial possessions or colonies in Africa included Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau. The Belgian political and economic development relied primarily on direct control of developments by its colonial bureaucracies, and direct involvement of the Catholic Church. In terms of developmental usurpation, Belgian colonial administration built robust infrastructures such as schools, railways, roads, plantations, mines, industrial areas, and airports. Despite the modest improvements in the lives of the Congolese, the Belgians created two separate societies, one for whites and the other for natives.

The whites had all the luxuries as opposed to native Africans who lacked almost everything. In fact, it was an apartheid-like type of social and political system where all the major decisions concerning Congo’s socio-economic and political development and modernization fell at the lapse of Brussels, with the indigenous Congolese population not even allowed to participate in the running of their own country. The construction of “two separate societies” policy by Belgium is what Zahorik, Jan (2019) referred to as the “formation of ethnic and racial categories”; a policy that traced its origin from Western or Hamitic mythology.

Hamitic hypothesis states that everything of value ever found in Africa was brought there by the Caucasian race. The theory is clearly symptomatic of the nature of race relations that permeated colonial policies in their Africa colonies all for the purpose of constructing a racist ideology that could permit the rape of Africa’s resources without a blink in the consciences of even the most ardent of Christians.

Also, according to Zahorik, Jan (2019), in the Belgian mandate territory of Ruanda-Urundi, the Tutsi aristocracy were elevated to the role of real rulers who enjoyed relative advantages in wealth, education and power while the Hutu farmers and Pygmies named Taw became officially second-class citizens; and that because of this hierarchical polarization of the society in

which social and ethnic categories became fixed that gave Rwanda and Burundi a genocidal character.

### British Colonial System of “Indirect Rule”

*“The British wanted traditional societies to maintain their uniqueness and therefore stay the way they had always been”-----Markovitz, Irving L. (1977:64).*

The British strategy in this model was to rule Africa from a far. Put another way, to impose an external control, or even ruling Africa all the way from England. With the stereotypes of Africans as less advanced and backward people, they opted for “indirect rule” as a way of preparing Africans whom in their opinion were not familiar with self-government until they would be ready to assume the full leadership of their countries after full independence. Indirect rule emphasized slow and gradual change that would not disturb the customs, traditions, institutions, mores and rural life styles of Africans. As a way to avoid total revolution, the British authorities believed in gradually increasing African participation in the political decisions of the colonies, using the political infrastructures already put in place by the British colonial government.

As a follow up, the British regime established legislative councils in West Africa, especially in Nigeria under the directives of Lord Lugard, the first Nigerian colonial governor, without a permanent presence in terms of large presence of British indigenous populations capable of raising the awe and suspicion of the local African population. Among the ethnic Ibos in eastern Nigeria, the British established “warrant” chiefs who served at the whim of the British Consuls and District Officers (DOs). The DOs who governed through the warrant Chiefs hence became the face of British authorities among the people of eastern Nigeria. There was a reversal in the pecking order of authority as the Warrant Chiefs appointed by the British authorities in Nigeria took precedent over the powers of the traditional local chiefs. Even, in many cases, the British cared less about the efficacy of the system they had introduced.

In practice, indirect rule became the system through which the British used African traditional rulers to subjugate the mass African populations. In fact, the way the British depended on indirect rule, their civilizing mission in Africa as well as taxation as a system of control in their African territories dominated

the works of Crowder, Michael (1964); Bush, Barbara and Malt by, Josephine (2004) and Hayes, Patricia (1997). Although African Chiefs showed their faces, the real and actual power rested with the British colonial officers. Examples are not far-fetched. The Aba Women’s Riot of October 1929 in particular, was perceived or seen as major challenge to the British colonial authority in Nigeria and West African region at large during the colonial era.

The roots of this social upheaval could be traced to 1914, when the first Nigerian colonial Governor, Lord Lugard imposed a system of “indirect rule” in Southern Nigeria. Under the British plan, the warrant Chiefs who were appointed by the British Governor formed the human infrastructural pillars of governance. Other essential and supplementary actors were the traditional Igbo Chiefs who were elected. As Evans, Marissa K (2012) observed, within a few years the appointed warrant chiefs became increasingly oppressive. They seized property, imposed draconian local regulations, and began imprisoning anyone who openly criticized them.

Although much of the anger was directed against the warrant chiefs, most Nigerians knew the source of their power, British colonial administrators. Colonial administrators added to the local sense of grievance when they announced plans to impose special taxes on the Igbo market women in Nigeria. These women were responsible for supplying the food to the growing urban populations in Calabar, Owerri, and other Eastern Nigerian cities. They feared that the taxes would drive many of the market women out of business and seriously disrupt the supply of food and non-perishable goods available to the populace.

This was necessitated by the fear among the local population in eastern Nigeria that the British would: (a) impose separate taxation on the basis of gender as warrant chief Okugo was mandated by the British to count the local population, including livestock for tax purposes. (b) dissatisfaction that price control measures instituted by the British as responsible for falling prices for local produce such as palm kernel, vegetable oil as opposed to imported goods which sold at relatively high prices. (c) Hatred and suspicion of the Warrant Chiefs and the native (customary) courts suspected of corruption and unfair sentencing practices. Several thousands of women participated in the mass riots and demonstration. The rampaging

women attacked the symbolic and oppressive institutions used by the British colonial powers that include native courts run by colonial officials and even burned some to the ground, European-owned factories and stores, Barclays Bank, as well as broke into prison and released inmates.

Even the residential neighborhoods in the towns were segregated. For example, the areas of the towns where European officials inhabited were designated and called "European quarters". These were the best or plum, isolated, and lined with trees, shrubs and peaches as well as good roads. Even in Northern Nigeria, where the British experiment had failed and where the Fulani and Hausa had established the Sokoto Caliphate with the Emirs at the helm, segregated neighborhoods characterized the British experience, as certain sections of the African community reserved for Africans, but not British officials were called "Sabon Gari", meaning "strangers' quarters" in English language. In reaction, the colonial troops and police were called in to quell the riots. They fired into the crowd, killed and wounded many. This violent reaction eventually forced the colonial authorities to drop their plans to impose a tax on the market women as well as to curb the excessive powers exercised by the Warrant Chiefs. In the end, the British ended the Warrant Chief system.

As Markovitz Irving Leonard further noted, under this model/ system of Indirect Rule, the British administration declared they would recognize and support the customary authorities in African tribal societies - the chiefs and elders, even though these authorities differed from any the British had previously encountered. However, the British insisted that they be purged of excesses – anything contrary to the British traditions and customs, such as polygamy, clitoridectomy (circumcision) which especially stirred the British sense of repulsion.

In fact, the British appeared to have learned from their earlier experience from the Mau Mau uprising in the 1950s which was deeply rooted in the resentment of the Kikuyu tribe in Kenya over the banning of the practices of circumcision which had great symbolic significance among the tribal population. In the illustrations of Lonsdale, John (1990) and Branch, David (2007), the resentment and uprising by the national liberation group, Mau Mau that followed led to further repression of the movement by the British and the eventual

declaration of emergency in Kenya by the British colonial administration.

### The French Colonial Policies of Direct Rule and Assimilation

*"The French objective, however, was not that the African should develop on his own lines, but that he should become civilized – that is a black Frenchman" ----Markovitz, Irving L. (1977:64).*

Permanent association of colonies with colonial France characterized the French policy in Africa. Its intention was never to lead its colonies to independence given the fact that France never wanted to break its ties or connection with its colonies. As Markovitz (1977: 64) challenged, "Who would want to break the connection with the mother country? To ensure complete juridical and administrative integration of the dependencies into the metropolitan institutions, the French system incorporated a type of unity and wholeness unique for the size and variety of its empire. The great goal of administrative integration was for a visitor to be able to "walk into any classroom in any school in any part of France and find every student in every classroom on exactly the same page in exactly the same book". Put succinctly to achieve total harmony in the educational system. The French refused to grant independence to their territorial holdings. They also did not abolish the system of "forced labor" on all adult population who were not French citizens nor allow universal suffrage characterized by the imposition of the poll tax in the colonial territories. But, instead, they extended citizenship to Africans. As a pragmatic rule, the French model rested on dual principles – direct rule and assimilation.

The French saw themselves as a superior race with a divine mandate to extend its superior racial culture of governance to the backward peoples of Africa inhabiting the colonies. They also assumed that the conferment of French citizenship was good enough to reward those Africans that showed competence in their socialization and embrace of the French civilization and culture.

African native institutions were either neglected or brushed aside as the French considered them primitive and deserving of the French imposition of its hegemony on them. Hence, the French colonial authority was centralized, with its headquarters in Paris through which it governed the colonies in Africa in a pecking or

hierarchical order through the Governor-General to local Governors and all the way down to the African native inhabitants of the colonies. The Governor Generals in the African colonies were based in Dakar, Senegal and Brazzaville respectively.

The French rule in Africa stood on two main ideological pillars, namely the imposition of “poll tax” which was an anathema to the principle of universal suffrage among the French colonial subjects and the imposition of forced labor practices on all non-French adult population.

Although the French boasted of their policy of direct rule and assimilation as promoting the universal principles of human rights and equality, it nonetheless was lacking in its implementation of the policy to its conclusive end. In the interim (at the outset), the French granted full citizenship to Senegalese inhabitants who had more contact with French settlers.

As the number grew the French replaced the policy of Assimilation with Association under which only the selected Africans were granted full French citizenship rights. The inclusion of citizens to include people in Senegalese towns of Goree and Dakar soon swelled the number of Africans with French citizenship in Africa, with the rest who enjoyed inferior status of “sujet” or Subjects liable or subject to forced labor.

With this, the French gave up their original plans to include local African rulers in their administration. Soon, the already retained local African leaders were relegated or reduced to mere and ordinary functionaries and in some cases, tax collectors. By so doing, the French succeeded in undermining African traditional sources of authority and replaced it with the French model which was entirely foreign to Africa.

It was not until the Brazzaville Conference of 1944, during World War II that a federation of African colonies and France recommended a Union. The delegates recommended political, social, and economic reforms in the colonies. In fact, research has shown that the Brazzaville Declaration as it was commonly referred made the following declarations:

- The French empire would remain united.
- Semi-autonomous assemblies would be established in each colony
- Citizens of French colonies would share equal rights with French citizens

- Citizens of French colonies would have the right to vote for the French parliament
- The native population would be employed in public service positions within the colonies
- Economic reforms would be made to diminish the exploitative nature of the relationship between France and its colonies.

The conference also committed the French government to respect local customs, abolish “indigenat”, adopt a new penal code, end labor conscription, improve health and educational facilities and opportunities and open positions in the colonial administration to Africans. In the end, the assembly reevaluated French colonial policy and drafted a plan for the union of France and the colonies. In addition to abolishing the “indigenat” and forced labor system, the French Government by relying on decrees, instituted several important reforms concerning Africans in 1945 and 1946. For example, it granted freedom of speech, association, and assembly to the residents of the colonies.

Also, it provided funds for social and economic development; adopted a new penal code and automatically granted all inhabitants of French colonies in Africa French citizenship. Of course, the failure of the colonial authorities of France to define in detail the rights of citizenship, delayed the indigenous African populations of the colonies from enjoying the full rights on the ground that they were perceived not ready for it.

Never the less, French political rule did a lot of harm in Africa in terms of undermining its traditional culture and institutions and introducing, promoting and sustaining a disparate pattern of development focusing primarily on French citizens and coastal areas where they lived in contrast to Africans who inhabited the interior.

### Belgian Colonial Policy of Paternalism

*“Unlike the French and British, the Belgians who monopolized politics and commerce offered the Congolese only one channel of upward mobility, the church” (Markovitz 1977: 66.)*

The Belgian colonial empire comprised three colonial possessions between 1901 and 1962. They include Belgian Congo (now Democratic Republic of the Congo), Rwanda and Burundi. According to Markovitz (1977: 64), the Belgian style of colonial rule had no philosophical (theoretical) or symbolic consideration for



national government or equality for Africans. Instead, it focused on or emphasized:

- Creating vital roles for the Catholic Church and the Congolese Clergy trained by the Church.
- Achieving “bureaucratic Integrity”

Relying on big Business for commercial and industrial exploitation and development.

Belgian colonial rule in Africa has been regarded as among the most integrationist among the colonial systems in Africa – British, French and Portuguese because of their impacts on the social structures and belief systems of indigenous Africans in the Belgian colonies. They stressed Christian monogamy and the adoption of Western way of life. The Belgian administrative rule in Africa meant direct rule of Africans in the colonies by Belgium, where no traditional African structures of governance were tolerated, no African representation in Belgian government, and absence of Africans in any form of political activity. They were blunt in their economic and political goals of generating optimum profit through economic efficiency and exploitation.

They embraced the goal of detribalizing the colonies as well as breaking down traditional African systems of authority. Because of the availability of skilled manpower driven by the shortage of Belgian nationals in the colonies, the Belgians embraced the idea of training Africans to take the place of Europeans at the lowest possible cost. Belgians were not ready to repeat the experience of the British in West Africa, such as those with nationalists like Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, who trained indigenous people in British universities, armed with knowledge and education in the hope that they would continue the British tradition as elites trained and grounded in British culture, education and way of life, who would continue and sustain the colonial-style administration.

However, they later fueled their nationalism that drove them to join the fight against colonialism after their return. Hence, the Belgians chose to insulate Africans from “subversion” by limiting them to practical and basic education, mainly at the primary and technical levels. The Belgian administration relied extensively on the Catholic Church to train many Africans in seminaries which they subsidized, as well as paid for the maintenance of catholic priests. One of the explanations as to why the Belgians opted to

expose Africans to Catholic education is that it instilled discipline, respect and total subservience to authority. This has the effect of making Africans less likely and less amenable to revolutionary activities against the Belgian colonial authority

The Belgians also carried out a program of legally authorized compulsory labor. As Markovitz (1977: 66), also observed, “large corporations themselves generally the subsidiaries of a handful of giant or huge holding companies, dominated business in the Congo and along with the church and the administration, composed a trinity of power. Whether based on plantations or on mining, at least one major enterprise dominated the area around it.”

The Belgian administration ratified Congo budget without debate and relied on executive fiat or decree by the King to enact all laws and settle disputes. It was not until 1957, when the political winds of Ghana’s independence began to be felt, that they proceeded to ponder and consider the possibility to entertain the idea of “emancipation” strictly to slow the pace of independence for its colonies.

This event was followed by the Leopoldville riots in 1959 which for the first time forced the Belgian colonial leaders to come to grips with the aspirations of the African masses. Nevertheless, they never gave up the idea that they could control or at least slow down the pace of political agitation for independence. Hence, the Belgians chose to reduce their footprint or presence in the colonies or rule through an invisible hand by planting the Belgian army officers in charge of the army and civil service on the assumption that by dominating key positions in the political and economic institutions, they could still govern the colonies through the veil, cover or façade of Belgium.

### Portuguese Policies of Assimilation and Paternalism

In general, the Portuguese were more ruthless than any of the colonial masters. They were also the last of the European powers to leave Africa. Their decline as world power and their relative poverty (compared to the other European powers) forced Portugal to exploit the colonies in a brutal manner. It appeared that the policy of assimilation and paternal responsibility were nothing more than myths used to conceal Portugal's cruel exploitation of her helpless,

powerless and vulnerable colonial subjects “as the first colonial power, Portugal instituted the policy of assimilation and paternalism in Africa. This ruthless policy perhaps accounts for the reason why it was the last colonial power to surrender its colonial territorial holdings. Portugal’s decline as a colonial and hegemonic power as well as its relative poverty in comparison with other colonial empires forced it to exploit its colonial possessions without conscience or feeling of obligation to its subjects.

Hence, the description of its colonial policy as assimilation and paternalism is nothing but a slogan used to cover its cruel policy of cruel exploitation without regard to any moral and ethical obligation toward its helpless and dependent colonial subjects. It should be noted that Portugal had always prided itself as a civilized nonracial western empire with a civilizing mission in Africa. It has been a widely held view that Angola, Portugal’s largest and richest colony had the highest illiterate population in comparison with the colonies of other colonial empires prior to its independence from Portugal in 1975.

To reflect, the oppressive and cruel nature of the Portuguese colonial administration and the response of the African indigenous people toward their liberation. It should be noted that in 1951, the Portuguese Colony of Angola became an Overseas Province of Portugal. In the late 1950s the People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) began to organize strategies and action plans to fight Portuguese rule as well as the remunerated forced labor system which affected many of the native black people from the countryside that were relocated from their homes and had to perform compulsory work, almost always unskilled hard work, in an environment of economic boom.

Resistance to Portuguese colonialism took on the nature of prolonged guerilla warfare staged and mounted by FRELIMO (Front for the Liberation of Mozambique). Even the implementation of the Portugal’s Organic law of 1885 could not slow the pace of resistance against the colonial system and policy. It should be noted that the 1885 law had established local units of government in African areas and increased the responsibilities of the Legislative Council, a white advisory Council. Other measures of late reforms instituted by the colonial empire in reaction to nationalistic goals and aspirations of the Angolan people included

relaxing the draconian nature and abuses of the “contract labor” system and expanding the number of Portuguese citizenships bestowed on African inhabitants of Mozambique.

Overwhelmed by and resentful of the sacrifice and burden of fighting and dying in a lingering war of attrition in foreign land, Portuguese army officers turned against the Portuguese colonial government by staging a coup d’état in 1974. Soon thereafter, in September 1973, Guinea-Bissau gained independence with Luis Cabral as President; followed by Mozambique in June 1975, when Samora Machel, Leader of FRELIMO became President; and followed by the independence of Angola in November 1975.

### CONCLUSION

European colonial experiences in Africa had some variations and uniqueness depending on the culture and politics of its possession or colonies and the colonial power involved. The French introduced the policy of “direct rule and assimilation” in order to convert Africans in their territories to “think and behave” like the French citizens.

The British on the other hand introduced the policy of self-government or indirect rule. It involved replacing traditional African Chiefs with “headmen” and “Warrant Chiefs” who worked as tokens and proxy to promote self-rule. As a supplement, the British government appointed also, indigenous Africans officials to be the face of the British, thereby reducing the latter’s footprint and doing its bidding.

Under the Belgian colonial government, its rule of paternalism was established. It relied primarily on Belgian multinational companies and the Catholic Church for control and governance. According to the Belgians, they exposed Africans to Catholic education in order to instill in them, discipline, respect and total subservience to the Belgian king; and by so doing, Africans would be less likely to engage in revolutionary behaviors, conducts and activities against the Belgian colonial authority.

For the Portuguese, they introduced the system of rule called *assimilation and paternalism*. Its decline as a poor and colonial power forced it into excessive and brutal exploitation of its African colonies. Portuguese colonies were known to have the highest illiterate populations in comparison to other colonial empires.

Therefore, the goals of the colonial powers in Africa were the same – to control the human and

material resources of Africa to their benefit. However, their means of achieving their colonial interests were different as it relates to social control, economic development and political integration.

Although African countries have achieved their independence, they are still hunted by the ghost of their colonial masters in the form of neocolonialism – economic, language and cultural dependency. Other contemporary or modern problems African nations still face include conflicts over international borders disputes resulting from separation of African tribes and communities through partition; categorization of ethnic groups; imposition of foreign languages such as French, Portuguese, English over indigenous African languages; and imposition of Christian religions. All the problems mentioned above constitute the lingering legacies of post-colonial African history, experiences and realities.

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