Terrorism Discourse: A Comparative Essay of Terrorism and Colonialism and their implications on Conflict Resolution in Africa- "Yesterday victims become today‟s perpetrators"

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"Discourse calls on the world to move forward as rapidly as possible, and yet calls the overthrow of a master-class's ideology, the one built on violence, destruction and genocide, barbaric…?"

Discourse of Colonialism
Aime Cesaire (1955, p. 27)

Introduction:

This work is a comparative analytical essay of two books: Mahmood Mamdani‟s Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the cold war, and the roots of terror published in 2004 and Joseba Zulaika & William A. Douglass‟ Terror and Taboo: the follies, fables, and faces of terrorism published in 1996. However, I will be drawing from other sources as I explore the topic: terrorism discourse, colonialism, and their impacts on conflict resolution in Africa which enforces the idea that, yesterday victims of terrorism often times become today‟s perpetrators.

Defining the concept Colonialism:

„Colony‟, „Colonization‟ and „Colonialism‟ have been used interchangeably to convey similar meanings. Even though these three concepts explain the physical, material and psychological barriers of African development, it has opened up the continent to the outside world. According to Osterhammel, a colony is a sociopolitical organization acquired either through conquests, lease, purchase or settlement usually by another nation (colonizer). The "new acquired territory" becomes the "bona-fide property of the colonizer."[1] Colonization, on the other hand is a process or the method which describes the mode of acquisition of a colony. Thus colonization can take place without the physical presence of the colonizer in the colony. Osterhammel defined colonialism as:

"…the relationship of domination between an indigenous (or forcibly imported) majority and a minority of foreign invaders. The fundamental decisions affecting the lives of the colonized people are made and implemented by the colonial rulers in pursuit of interests that are often defined in a distant metropolis. Rejecting cultural compromises with the colonized population, the colonizers are convinced of their own superiority and of their ordained mandate to rule…" [2]

 Moreover, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana in his autobiography, defined colonialism as "…the policy by which a foreign power binds territories to her own economic advantage." [3]Also, Jules Ferry, the former Prime Minister of France between 1880 and 1885, noted that colonies are the "most lucrative methods of investing capital... [And were] outlets for our manufacturers."[4]These words justify the political and economic exploitation of the colonies by the colonizers. Patrice Lumumba, the first president of Democratic Republic of Congo, declared on the eve of Congo‟s independence: "Who will forget…the fusillades where so many of our brothers perished or the prisons where all those who were brutally flung, who no longer wished to submit to the regime of a law of oppression and exploitation which the colonists had made a tool of their domination."[5]This type of domination terrorized, disenfranchised and marginalized the oppressed by causing serious psychological and physical damage to many Africans.

Colonialism, to Frantz Fanon, could not have operated "without the possibility [of] torturing, of violating, and of massacring …Africans."[6]It succeeded in creating fear among the colonized on the bases of racial superiority, cultural superiority and the violent superimposition of metropolitan colonialists‟ governmental structures which inadvertently imposed a psychological barrier on the colonized. This invariably re-enforced the myth of racial and cultural superiority of the colonialists‟. However, by the turn of the twentieth century, the myth surrounding white superiority was broken immediately after the Second World War, and consequently "removed…the psychological barrier… [and] the…quest for self-determination became more

pronounced in Africa."[7]In other words, colonial terrorism began to lose grounds to nationalists" agitations for independence.

More so, there were four types of modern colonialism. The first was "direct domination" or the "empire- building". It was pursued by certain western European nations, like Britain, France, Spain, and Portugal.[8]Under this type were two systems – Direct and Indirect, which operated differently in various parts of Africa. Generally, the indirect rule was most closely associated with the British, while French rule, was thought to be much more assimilatory and direct.9A direct rule, was a straight transplant of the colonialists" system of administration, social and political institutions, literally forced on the acquired colonies. In some cases, the colonized were made to go through stringent processes of acculturation – literally forced to adopt or learn the ways of life of the colonizers. For instance, to attain the status of ‚evolue' (i.e. black French man) required extraordinary great services like military service before an individual qualified as a citizen of France.[10]Also, Britain flirted with the direct rule system in South Africa but it failed.[11]

Lord Luggard, the governor of Nigeria (1912-1919) invented the indirect rule system. He systematized the operations by incorporating the local governmental structures of Nigeria into the colonial system purposely to dominate them.[12]Indirect rule then became a colonial system of governance which integrated the local political structures into the colonial state, in a dual system. Typically, the higher level of government and administration was filled with public servants from the respective metropolitan countries while actual governance of the colonized natives was through the chieftaincy system. Indirect rule, contributed to the increasing role of ethnicity and patronage.

The implications of these two colonial systems on conflict resolution in Africa were profound. John Lederach developed the ‚prescriptive and elicitive" approaches of resolving intractable ethnic conflicts in Africa and the world over.[13]The Prescriptive approach generally assumes universal models of conflict resolution which are then applied or adapted in particular cultural situations. It uses western conflict methodologies and processes which oftentimes were misfits as far as managing contextual conflict were concerned. The Prescriptive approach is imposed, and is a one-fit-all model with minor to no adjustments.[14]The Elicitive approach, on the other hand, recognizes the existence of distinctive cultural understandings of conflict and their resolution, as such it clarifies, elucidates, and enhances through reflection and dialogue.[15]

Conflict Resolution systems in Africa are largely based on the elicitive model. The Akan traditional system of Ghana for instance, resolves interpersonal, intergroup and intra-group

conflicts by the use of the clan heads, village chiefs, paramount chiefs, queen mothers, fetish priests or priestesses through dialoguing and invocation of the ancestors during deliberations at the local level. However, in the urban centers, the court systems are widely used.[16]

The second type of colonialism was "colonies without colonialism."[17]An example is New England (the colonial America). The third type was "colonialism without colonies" or "internal colonialism"[18] - A classic example is Britain and the British Isles -Wales, Scotland and Ireland. In this category, there was a dominant center and dependent peripheries within a nation-state. This is "informal colonialism."[19]Osterhammel summed up the terror and oppression of colonialism by noting that more than 600 million people, about two-fifth of the world‟s population stood under it, 400 million were in Asia, 120 million in Africa, 60 million in Oceania and 14 million in America.[20]

Defining the concept Terrorism:

Terrorism is an amorphous term. Scholars have defined it variously to suit different contexts in different circumstances and times. As a consequence, it has opened the concept to different interpretations and meanings. Central to these definitions however, is the violent use of force, which causes physical, material, and emotional damage; and ultimately leads to deaths of innocent individuals or many people.[21]Terrorists use widespread "fear" [22]as an instrument and panic leading to pandemonium, and consequent break down of law and order to hammer the targets. Notwithstanding, acts of terrorism could either be "factual to include some intrinsic behaviors that may be captured in plays, threats, rituals and dreaming acts or fictional representations which appear in the mass media, political manipulations, academic definitions and imaginary archetypes." [23]

Wardlaw gave a comprehensive definition of terrorism as:

"…the use, or threat of use of violence by an individual or group, whether acting for or in opposition to established authority, when such action was designed to create extreme anxiety and/or fear-inducing effects in a target group larger than the immediate victims, with the purpose of coercing that group into acceding to the political demands of the perpetrators." [24]

Implications on Conflict Resolution in Africa:

However, Zulaika & Douglass debunked Wardlaw‟s assertion over what constitutes or is labeled „terrorist behavior‟ and noted that, Wardlaw‟s contention was too cosmetic and simplistic. They argued that, in order to know and understand the labeling process, it is vital for the individual or

the organization doing the labeling itself must equally be scrutinized instead of concentrating on some particular acts and events of terror to define the whole concept.[25]Hence, to understand the politics of terror and to define it appropriate, a clear-cut distinction should be made between the appropriate extent of violent actions for nationalists‟ agitations and revolutionary movements like separatists, and freedom fighters who are legitimately battling all forms of oppressions and repressive sociopolitical systems and dictatorial regimes planted as proxies for the imperialists or left behind by the colonial systems which cause some leaders to maintain ties or develop new alliances with their former masters or have become puppet African regimes tied to the apron-strings of the colonial masters to oppress their own citizens. For example, the recent „Arab Spring‟ which led to the fall of Ben Ali of Tunisia, Hosni Murbarak of Egypt and Muammer Gaddafi of Libya validates this assertion.

According to Riches, violence is synonymous to terrorism.[26]Therefore, any disenfranchised, marginalized and oppressed people everywhere around the world who are pushed to "the point of no return" 27, would resort to some kind of violence, which in fact is necessary to maintain sociopolitical equilibrium in that state with such repressive self-styled democratic regimes of Africa which still flirt with the colonial masters to terrorize their own citizens. Consequently, Frantz Fanon defined terrorism as a political violence which involves an intentional willingness to injure civilian noncombatants… [though] unfortunate [but] necessary.[28]Thus, terrorism is an aspect of absolute violence, but a necessary practical tool, for social change.

Nordstrom & Martin in their work "The culture of conflict: Field reality and theory" noted that, violent socio-cultural realities remain central to competing claims for power both among and within states.[29]Violence then, is either tangible (the killings, torture, and physical destruction of properties) or intangible (emotional, psychological, and mental damage).[30]

Foucault, realized that the use of power must be regulated. The monopolization of power by states has an adverse impact on social order.[31]The recent political upheavals and extra judicial killings of political opponents by government leaders of Libya, Egypt, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Ivory Coast found out should you fail to concede power to popular uprising. Thus, "power tends to corrupt and absolute power, corrupts absolutely" Lord Acton -1887.[32]Therefore, colonialism and oppressive dictatorial regimes invariably precipitate terrorism.[33]

Derek Wright maintained that colonialism in Africa disregarded the various tribal barriers, which helped to solidify and preserve the socio-cultural identities of the ethnic groups.[34]

As a consequence, several tense situations have developed in the last fifty-years with violent terrorist activities along border towns in several African countries These have occurred due to different ethnic groups forced apart as a result of the partitioning of Africa at the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, „to put[ting] all Negroes in the same bag‟ as Fanon would say; even though the colonial cartographical lines separate ethnic groups linguistically, historically, culturally and broke the identities of groups.

This has, therefore, resulted in the multiplicity of guerrilla warfare, ethnic insurgencies, their intractability and accompanying fatalities in Africa today.[35]For instance, the "shift in identity and rewriting of histories … and rewriting of histories …Hutus and Tutsis in post- genocide Rwanda; [and] Arabs and Africans [since] 1972 in Sudan."[36]Also, Fanon citing the 1955 Algerian civil war where …12,000 victims [died] in Phillippeville…"argued that the violent acts of terrorism in some parts of the world are an off-shoot of colonialism, because of the tribal and social divisions associated with its inception.[37]

 Moreover, colonialism and self-determination brought about both reformists and radicals within various colonies to pursue a common agenda which was to dismantle colonialism and liberate the colonies. However, the two groups "have different answers to the question of how to confront Western modernity and global dominance."[38]Mamdani observed, to eradicate domestic colonialism in United States, fundamentalist clergies led the civil rights movements to champion the course of Political Christianity. These became necessary because of the established religious hierarchy of Christianity. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., for instance, was a Baptist clergy. He declared the following against the conditions of racial terror blacks were facing in United States:

"When you take a cross-country drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you;…when your first name becomes „nigger‟, your middle name becomes „boy‟(however old you are) and your last name becomes „John‟; …harried by day and haunted by night…constantly at tiptoes stance, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments, when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of „nobodiness‟- then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait"[39]

The reformists‟ (the clergies‟) approach to decolonization was to pressurize the existing colonial governments to make adequate constitutional reforms.

Contrarily, the radical movements such as, (the Popular Movement for the Independence of Angola (MPLA) & Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) of Angola; Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) of Mozambique; African National Congress (ANC) & Pan-African Congress (PAC) of South Africa; Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) & Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) of Zimbabwe, and Political Islam) believed in "political identity and political power to develop new ideological states".[40]

Political Islam, for example, originated from the ideas of non-clerical political intellectuals, who

aimed at changing the political, economic and social conditions existing in the Muslim world which they perceived were caused by the double standard of „the West".[41]Some of the intellectuals who believed in violent political terrorism are Muhammed Iqbal and Mohammed Ali Jinnah of colonial India. However, to argue, that, "all political Islamists or fundamentalists believed in political terrorism"[42]would be sociologically inaccurate and historically improbable, to say the least. These outgrowths always accused the reformists of being bed-fellows with the infidel (i.e. the colonialists or the occupiers) and have slowed down the revolutionary processes. Finally, political Islam could not be equated to Muslim religious fundamentalism.

According to Okyere, the methodologies of the two major political parties – the United Gold Coast Convention (U.G.C.C) and Convention Peoples Party (C.P.P.) of Ghana had two diametrically opposite approaches to the British colonial rule in Ghana. The UGCC method was „self-government in the shortest possible time".[43]This means that, independence would be obtained through constitutional means or process, which made them „softer" towards the British colonizers. The CPP, on the other hand, advocated for „self-government now".[44]In this way, they demanded swift, radical and uncompromising steps to force the demise of colonialism in Ghana. Also, these sharp divisions were caused by the radical revolutionaries or the independentists (who were made up of youths that want change at all cost), were the driving force behind the CPP while the veterans or reformists used social protests and organized political actions against the colonialists.[45]This point solidifies and authenticates the historical role of youths in resolving political dilemmas and dismantling autocratic regimes in Africa. A current example is the Arab Spring.

In addition, some African leaders inherited some colonial governmental structures and have not advanced any reforms since. These regimes have produced post-colonial dictatorships that have stifled political and economic developments in these countries. Thus, keeping these "colonial political structures; …and completing what the white man had started"[46]through the divide-and-rule process to perpetuate colonial political legacies. After the independence of Egypt, the military led by Gamel Abdul Nasser took power in 1952. Nasser and his military junta were supported by the Society of Muslim Brothers (SMB) - a single mass organization championing nationalist struggle in Egypt. Later, Nasser arrested over 1,000 members who demanded that the ban on political party formation be lifted and Nasser must hand over power to civilian administration. However, a majority of the members were brutally hunted down and killed or imprisoned.[47]Therefore, Frantz Fanon in his observation, argued that such series of prohibitions in the world can only "be called into question by absolute violence"[48]and that terrorism is an aspect of absolute violence, but a necessary practical tool, for social change.

Moreover, yesterday"s victims of terrorism have become today"s perpetrators; in spite of the fact that some of these African leaders (Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and former rebel leader Jonas Savimbi of Angola) were members of the various liberation movements.

All in all, colonialism fueled the discourse of terrorism, even though terrorism is an unfortunate means of warfare, it also violates the international laws of protection of the non- combatant civilian population during peace-time or war time under Chapter II, Article 51 of the UN

Protocol I as an addition to 1977 Geneva Convention.[49]However, terrorism promotes individual self-respect by destroying myths, releasing tension and aggression of a dominant group over a subordinate group. Also, terrorism may lead to realization of political independence, and serve as an effective communication tool to the colonial oppressors. Finally, terrorism creates national identity and promotes national culture.[50]

It is significant to note that, Zulaika and Douglass, and Mahmood Mamdani both acknowledged that, colonialism and all forms of oppression will precipitate political terrorism. However, Mamdani, believed that religious fundamentalism is not part and does not create political Islam, rather the Cold War did. On the other hand, Zulaika and Douglass argued that political Christianity does not engender political terrorism rather it strengthens nationalists" agitations against brutalizing of their citizens by neo-colonialist autocratic leaders in Failed and Collapsed states like Somalia, Rwanda, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Cameroon.

Endnotes

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