THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FANON'S POLITICAL THEORY TO PAN AFRICANISM

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ABSTRACT

The study explores the contributions of Frantz Fanon political theories towards the liberation of the African countries from the imperial invasion of the colonialists. Fanon personified ''Decolonization as the meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by their nature, which in fact owe their originality to that sort of sub-stratification which results from and is nourished by the situation in the colonies. He stressed further to say that ''we must archive revolutionary socialism all together everywhere, or else one by one we would be defeated by our colonial masters''. The aphorism from Fanon, was actually to awake the consciousness of Africans and other European colonies to reject the imperial structures in their respective communities. This according to him was a ''divide and rule system'' by the colonialists, to penetrate deeply into their colonies' administrative structures.

INTRODUCTION

The history of decolonization in Africa was probably grimmer than in any other part of the world. It was almost nowhere an easy or peaceful matter, whether it was the Dutch in Indonesia, the French Indochina (Vietnam) or Portuguese in Goa on the Indian subcontinent. The detritus of European colonialism and of subsequent Western economic intervention was too frequently economic chaos and political bloodshed. Understanding the history of the colonial encounter between Europe and Africa, is crucial in grasping why the logic of development whether expressly or impliedly was at the epicenter of the civilizing mission. Colonialism as in fact been qualified as Europe's first gift of science to the rest of the world, (Hegel, 1988). In the 19th century, Africa without any doubt presented itself as a perfect laboratory for such an experiment. European intellectuals were quick to adopt an unqualified premise that Africa had no history of its own, and even if there was any, it was either redundant, of little relevance to the modern world or nothing to take home- a strong supposition that nothing happened there in its ''prehistory

Beside oral testimonies, historical accounts of life in Africa, before the arrival of the Europeans were at best scanty. Those who expressed concern more often than not perpetuated the sense that the history of Africa was the history of white activity there. African customs and traditions were nothing more than mere curiosity. It is European actions that were of importance and relevance, (Hegel and Rauch 1992). Tales of explorers striding the dangerous jungles and deserts of Africa aroused enormous interests in the European metropolitan reading public. As the interests over these men and their activities augmented, a corpus of both real and fictional heroes –missionaries, explorers, traders, early officials, lawyers, etc - quickly began to emerge. This includes the likes of James Bruce, Mongo Park, David Livingstone and Henry Stanley. They reflected the best of Europe; exemplars of brave men to emulate; exemplars of goodness and a clear manifestation of what greatness could archive. Their findings and reports about the African landscapes and natives were crucial in establishing a determinate perception of non-Europeans in general and Africans in particular.

(Frantz Fanon, 1961), personified ‘’Decolonization as the meeting of two forces, opposed to eachother by their nature, which in fact owe their originality to that sort of sub-stratification which results from and is nourished by the situation in the colonies.4 A sharp cultural distinction drawn between the civilized Europeans and primitive or savage Africans was crucial in underlining the economic imperativeness of the civilizing mission. It was monologue which projected ‘’the other’’ as anything but alien. The encounter with Africa was an encounter with a primitivism, given that Africa had been left behind in a throwback stage of human development. It was an encounter between a sovereign who could do as it pleased and a backward polity that waslacking in sovereignty, hence also lacking in its rights analogy. Colonialism thus came with a completely new set of challenges, especially with regard to framing and regulating relations with the non-European peoples, already qualified as uncivilized.

While Africans were commonly described as primitive and backward, Europeans on the other hand were seen to be scientific, innovative, civilized, etc-attributes which by implication certified that they were advanced beings, hence superior to their colonized subjects. European civilization was essentially characterized by two broad attributes: individualism and rationality- the two moved hand -in hand. While individualism enabled material progress, rationality on the other hand was the underpinning for scientific progress.

Decolonization in Africa south of the Sahara took place less turbulently. Ghana proclaimed independence in 1957, as the first followed by a neighboring country Nigeria, in 960. And by this period, almost all French and British possessions in Africa had gained freedom. The Portuguese held on stubbornly but were also driven out of Africa by 1975. Nevertheless, the continuing economic presence of Europeans states in black. Africa led radicals to accuse Europeans of ‘’neo-colonial’’ attitudes.

Although the expectations ran high in the new states, they soon found themselves beset with problems of extreme poverty and antagonistic tribal groups that had little loyalty to the new nations. Under the new globalism, the world’s nation soon divided into three levels. The ‘’First World’’consisted of the advanced industrial countries, basically by the 1960s Japan

and the states ofWestern Europe and North America. The ‘’Second World’’ comprised the Soviet Union and its satellites while most of the rest of the world’s nations are known collectively as the ‘’Third World.’’ Their status as ‘’backward’’ nations led many Third World countries to modernize by pursuing Western technology and industrialization (Henderson, 1978, p.356).

Political turmoil in Africa was compounded by the onset of a massive economic decline in the 1970s after the global escalation of petroleum prices and the attendant inflation in prices for Western technology, seedand every part of the continent, impairing agricultural development and bringing starvation to many areas. African states were compelled to divert currency from development projects to import goods for their swelling populations at the very time that falling world prices for agricultural commodities and metals diminished the market value of Africa’s major exports and the sources of foreign currency.

As a consequence of these and other factors, Africa was, at the end of the twentieth century, an impoverished and strife-torn continent. Conflicts erupted in the Sudan and Chad between a Muslim North and Christian/animist south, in Ethiopia between the Marxist central government and the Islamic Eritreans, and in Angola and Zimbabwe between the government and ethnic and regional revolutionary movements that had participated in the struggle for independence but not in the subsequent regime.

The early 1990s witnessed the further weakening of states collapsed under the weight of failed economies and ethnic and clan warfare. In Somalia the fall of the dictatorship of SiadBarre plunged the country into anarchy and civil war claimed 150,000 lives and many more fled the country. In Rwanda and Burundi, ethnic slaughter left nearly a million dead. Those who fled to hoped- for safety in neighboring Zaire (now called the Congo) were confronted in early 1997 by the collapsed of that country’s social and economic structure as well, and by political instability following the forced resignation of long-time dictator SeseSeko Mobuto.

DECOLONIZATION STRUGGLES IN AFRICA AND FANON'S THEORECTICAL

APPROACH/CONTRIBUTIONS:

'We must archive revolutionary socialism all together everywhere, or else one by one we will be defeated by our colonial masters''. (Frantz Fanon) The aphorism here, was to awake theconsciousness of Africans and other European colonies to reject the imperial structures in their respective communities. As this according to him was a ''divide and rule system'' by the colonialists, to penetrate deeply into their colonies' administrative structures. The European intervention in Africa was given a legal meaning, justified as vital to foster economic prosperity and growth framed in terms of moral humanitarianism – a mandate for the advanced to rule the backward peoples and assist them to advance. It was an articulation of universalism premised on the narrative of progress as a result of the civilizing mission (Hawkins, 1997, p204). The fundamental distinction between the civilized and the primitive or the advanced and the backward was thus an enabler for the colonizers to articulate various areas of human endeavor that the non-European societies in general and Africa in particular lacked behind as well as propound a way out of their backwardness and economic stagnation.

The idea of international society which recognizes the existence of common principles and the superior unity of the great human society, became the basis for rallying behind the colonial conquest. The logic of progress and the promise of transforming backward peoples and societies towards modernity made international law particularly appealing and attractive. The 19th century was ''pre-eminently the era of civilization whether we consider what has already been achieved, or the rapid advances making towards still greater achievements''. (John Stuart, 1991, p.119)

Colonial world according to Fanon, is a world divided into compartments. It is probably unnecessary to recall the existence of schools for natives and schools for Europeans; in the same way we need not to recall apartheid in South Africa. Yet, if we will mine closely this system of compartments, we will at least be able to reveal the lines of force it applies. Decolonization never takes place unnoticed, for it influences individuals and modifies themfundamentally. It is the veritable creation of new men. As European economies increasingly

witnessed profound boosts productivity and net outputs, beginning from the 19th century.

European powers increasingly saw the acquisition of Africa as crucial to satisfy its economic imperatives namely: reinforcing home industries and instituting a market for finished products. While professing liberalism, European encroachment to Africa, was too sudden and it no doubt exemplified a turn from informal to formal empire. The defensive attitudes created by this violent bringing together of the colonized man and the colonial system, form themselves into a structure which then reveals the colonized personality. This ‘’sensitivity’’ is easily understood, if we simply study and are alive to the number and depth of the injuries inflicted upon a native during a single day spent amidst the colonial regime.(p,250).

It must in any case be remembered that a colonized people is not only a dominated people. Under the German occupation the French remained men; under the French occupation, the Germans remained men. However, in European Colonies like Algeria for example, there was not simply the domination but the decision to the letter not to occupy anything more than the sum total of the land. The Algerians, the veiled women the palm trees, the camels make up the landscape and the natural background to the human presence of the French.

The naked truth of decolonization evokes for us the searing bullets and bloodstained knives which emanate from it. For if the last shall be first, this will only come to pass after the murderous and decisive struggle between the two protagonists. That affirmed intention to place the last at the head of things, and to make them climb at a pace (too quickly, some say) the well- known steps which characterize an organized society, can only triumph if we use all means to turn the scale, including, of course, that of violence.

You do not turn any society, however primitive it may be, upside down with such a programme if you have not decided from the very beginning, that is, from the actual formulation of that programme, to overcome all the obstacles that you will come across in so doing. The native whodecides to put the programme into practice, and to become its moving fore, is ready for violence atall times. From birth it is clear to him that this narrow world, strewn with prohibitions, can only be called in question by absolute violence.

The colonized society is a world cut in two. The dividing line, the frontiers are shown by barracks andpolice stations. In the colonies, it is the policeman and the soldier who are the officials, instituted between the spokesmen of the settler and his rule of oppression. In capitalist societies the educational system, whether lay or clerical, the structure of moral reflexes handed down from father to son, the exemplary honesty of workers who are given a medal after fifty years of good and loyal service, and the affection which springs from harmonious relations and good behaviour – all these aesthetic expressions of respect for the established order serve to create around the exploited person an atmosphere of submission and of inhibition which lightens the task of policing considerably.

In the capitalist countries a multitude of moral teachers, counsellors and ‘’bewilders’’ separate the exploited from those in power. In the colonial countries, on the contrary, the policeman and the soldier, by their immediate presence and their frequent and direct action maintain contact with the native and advise him by means of the rifle butts and napalm not to bridge. It is obvious here that the agents of government speak the language of pure force.

The society belonging to the colonized people, or at least the native town, the Negro village, the medina, reservation is a place of ill fame, people by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not how nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other, and their huts are built one on top of the other.

The European naturally presupposed the denigrating and dehumanizing of the ‘’other’’. They were habitually defined by negatives –their economy was trapped at primitive levels of productivity, they lacked individuality, rationality, innovation and the power of reasoning, which were all tools for progress. In fact, they were deficient in all positive virtues of social and political order. The civilizing mission being a moral crusade naturally necessitates a protagonist who is more superior and advanced in reasoning, thinking and material understanding of the world. (p39).

The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, and of light. The town, is a crouching village, a town is on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. It is a town of niggers and dirty Arabs. The look of lust, a look of

envy; it expresses his dreams of possession: to sit at the settle's table, to sleep in the settler's bed, with his wife if possible. The colonized man is an envious man. And this the settler knows very well; when their glances meet he ascertains bitterly, always on the defensive, ''they want to take our place.'' It is true, for there is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the settler's place. Fanon personified a colonized society with a lot of horrible objects, which according to him were perpetrated by the Europeans.

The colonialist's logic was impeccable and one is only staggered by the counter-logic visible in the behaviour of the native insofar as one has not clearly understood beforehand, the mechanisms of the settler's ideas (p. 89). From the moment that the native has chosen the methods of violence, police reprisals automatically call forth reprisals on the side of the nationalists. However, the results are not equivalent, for machine-gunning from airplanes and bombardments from the fleet go far beyond in horror and magnitude any answer the natives can make.

This recurring terror de-mystifies once and for all the most estranged members of the colonized race. They find out on the spot that all the piles of speeches on the equality of human beings do not hide the commonplace fact that the seven Frenchmen killed or wounded at the Col de Sakamody kindles the indignation of all civilized consciences, whereas the sack of the dours of Guergour and of the dechras of Djerar and the massacre of whole population- which had merely called forth the Sakamodyambuch as a reprisal-all this is of not the slightest importance. Terror, counter-terror, and violence, counter-violence: that is what observers bitterly record when they describe the circle of hate, which is so tenacious and so evident in Algeria.

In all armed struggles, there exists what we might call the point of no return. Almost always it is marked off by a huge and all-inclusive repression which engulfs all sectors of the colonized people. This point was reached in Algeria in 1955 with the 12,000 victims Philippeville, and in 1956 withLacoste's instituting of urban and rural militias. The creation of militias according to the French colonies they say will lighten the task of the army. It will free certain units whose mission will be to protect the Moroccan and Tunisian borders. In Algeria, the army is six hundred thousand strong. Almost all

the Navy and the Air Force are based there. There is an enormous, speedy police force with a horribly good record since it has absorbed the ex-tortures from Morocco and Tunisia. The territorial units are one hundred thousand strong. The task of the army, all the same must be lightened. So let us create urban militias. The fact remains that the hysterical and criminal frenzy of Lacoste imposes them even clear-sighted French people.

In forty-eight hours two thousand volunteers were enrolled. The Europeans of Algeria responded immediately to Lacoste's call to kill. From now on each European must check up on all surviving Algerians in his sector; and in addition he will be responsible for information for a ''quick response'' to act of terrorism. Today, to the surface mopping- up is added a deeper harrowing. Today, to the killing which is all in the day's work is added planified murder. ''Stop the bloodshed,'' was the advice given by the UNO.t West African country, to gain freedom from the colonialists

CONCLUSION

As afore-noted, the European and African encounter postulated hefty gap in terms of cultural differences. Thus, introduced series of techniques aimed at bridging this gap between the civilized or advanced Europeans or uncivilized or backward others. However, the mission to civilize the uncivilized, liberate them out of their backward state and lead them towards progress (development). The significance of such images as ''backward,'' ''Dark continent, ''inferior'' ''uncivilized'' among other adjectives cannot be overemphasized. Once the image of ''other'' was validated as backward and wanting, the need for Europeans to civilize and lead them towards progress (development) became all the more transparent with the universalist rhetoric seducing support for the mission as a force for good.

The General Act of the Berlin Conference, between November, 1884-February, 1885, valorized the main objectives of the civilizing mission as ''instructing the natives and bringing home to them the blessings of civilization. However, the encounter between the Europe and Africa in the 19th century, was rather a product of force and violence. Thus,

colonization according to the analysis is central and not peripheral for mutual relations. The unity exhibited by European powers towards one another in Africa, was testimony to how far civilization had transformed Europeans and enabled them to completely detach their identity from savagery and backwardness which every man was in bondage to in the throwback age.

The conception of European/ African relations, naturally inspired the consciousness and vision toimpose civilization on non-Europeans, hence the exportations of droitpulique de l' Europe to colonized territories and the universalizing of the discipline. By identifying themselves as the rightful barons to codify the morality of states, Europeans were able to determine what eventually constituted objects of universality. And they quickly argue that it is only through colonization that many of the normative doctrines of the discipline were forged out as an attempt to create a legal system that could account for relations between the European and the non-European worlds in the colonial confrontation.

The Peace of Westphalia (1648) which ended the thirty years war in Europe is commonly regarded as signaling the origin of independence and sovereignty doctrine. The thirty years war was characterized by the struggle for self-determination in identity and government against the hegemonic power of the Holy Roman Empire, with the Westphalian peace – actually two separate treaties, Munster and Osnabruck –resolving the conflict by validating the state system and affirming the full juridical autonomy of every state in managing its own affairs. All states were deemed to enjoy sovereign equality –that is, all sovereign states were conceived as juridical equals to one another – according to a newly formulated caveat that international relations should be driven by balance of power considerations instead of ideals of Christendom.

Decolonization never takes place unnoticed, for it influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally. It is the veritable creation of new men. European economies increasingly witnessed profound boosts productivity and net outputs beginning from the 19th century and the imperial powers increasingly saw the acquisition of Africa as crucial to satisfy its economic imperatives namely: reinforcing home industries and instituting a market for finished products. While

suggesting liberalism, European encroachment to Africa was too sudden and it has indeedexemplified further subjugations of Africans. This of course brought imperialism as one of the strategies they use even after their departure from Africa.

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