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Liberalism: An Obstacle to Black Unification

Christine Ohenewah

[Note to Readers: This is the third chapter of a larger honors thesis, titled “Blood Diamonds: The Recovery of Black Unification Amidst White Hegemony”]

Introduction

Although chapter one highlights the digression of relations between Africans and African Americans in the new millennium, chapter two reveals that this current rift has not always been potent, for we can look to the Pan-African Movement as a historical site of collaboration between the two ethnicities; a site where Black solidarity emerged transnationally to resist White imperial domination. Now, we recall the argument that the termination of colonialism over a half-century ago no longer necessitates a call for present day Pan-African conscious. I believe this argument stands false. Colonialism left behind a successor that bears a new name and seemingly benign appearance that, now more than ever, demands the vigor of mid-20th century Pan-Africanism. This successor is liberalism.

In the same vein that White citizenry serves as a divisive agent in African and African American unity, in this chapter I argue that mid-20th century liberalism adopted this same role in the wake of Pan-African upsurge. Said another way, just as White citizenry assumes a gate-keeping position in the assent to American assimilation, liberalism follows suit by serving as a means of induction into Western global favor. Each invites stratification and dismantling among any potential threats to the empire of White imperialism, both in U.S. internal affairs and in international politics. Given, then, White citizenry’s influence over relations between Africans and African Americans and liberalism’s impact on the Pan-African Movement, any manifestation of Black unification can be understood to be a threat. Here, as in previous

chapters, I use ‘Black’ to denote the African Diaspora, rather than a restriction to an American racial context.

International discourse has long rendered liberalism as an ideology of optimism, aiming to attain specific objectives: the proliferation of democracy, support for human rights, capitalist expansion, international cooperation, and pacifism. Liberal ideology affirms that the establishment of ‘correct’ political systems and domestic groups is likely to encourage states to engage in international cooperation. Although seemingly benign in its efforts to reinforce international harmony, I contend that liberalism augments cultural hegemony and homogenization. As a mode of Western imperialism, it assumes the guise of world peace to ensure self-interests and ‘ideal’ paradigms, while increasing the global jurisdiction of dominant nation-states. Scholar Patrick Morgan asserts,

“It is not that international politics must eventually embrace and inculcate these particular norms, but that, as an elaborate social activity, international politics needs elements of community including a structure of norms. Liberalists are busy pushing their preferred norms with this in mind.”

Said another way, states must seek cooperation rather than sovereignty and autonomy and be flexible towards embracing normalized values. We must however question the ‘acceptance of norms’ as a feature of liberalism. In analyzing the mission to spread liberalism to other non-democratic countries, we must interrogate *which* actors are promoting preferred norms and practices for the international community and *at whose expense* these norms are being enforced.

My chapter responds to the following questions: How is mid-20th century liberalism in tandem with White citizenry? Does liberalism embody a global manifestation of White citizenship? In what ways does liberalism impede the progress of Black unification? Finally, how does liberalism bear resemblance to colonialism? In chapter one we recall that White citizenry predicates itself on norms based in Whiteness, (i.e. hard work, education, high socioeconomic status). Similarly, liberalism comprises of democratic, capitalist, and human rights values. Both systems determine the acceptance of a minority group or nation-state, given that they follow the aforementioned paradigms. Using Ghana as a case study to delve into Kwame Nkrumah's Pan-African leadership, I argue that liberalism is an ideology rooted in colonialism and serves as a global index of White citizenship. Its disruption of transatlantic Black unification efforts further relies on three elements: primitivism, patronization, and the manipulation of power.

In the course of this chapter, I first trace the damaging outcomes colonialism induced within Ghana's infrastructure. I subsequently discuss the role that late Ghanaian leader Kwame Nkrumah played in buttressing the Pan-African Movement and how Pan-African efforts were curbed by liberal agendas within international politics. Finally, I explain the similarities that modern liberal ideology shares with White citizenry and recapitulates colonial iniquities. If we consider that liberalism resembles colonialism, which ignited calamities within Ghana's infrastructure, it would then hold that liberal ideology is non-ideal for *all* nation-states and operates to homogenize the rest of the international community according to Western tradition. Pan-Africanism's Black unification agenda would thus stand in opposition to an empire of Western governance that has been solidified by colonial conquest. Remembering that anti-Blackness works to sustain White supremacy by degrading Black culture, we must then recognize that anti-Blackness and White citizenry function globally through liberalism. We must further

recognize that liberalism is an ideology fueled with self-interests that enhance the authority of the West at the expense of nations who refuse Western paradigms. Ghana's Pan-African Movement, which represented historic collaboration between Africans and African Americans, challenged such paradigms and thus became a target for the West.

Scholarly Debate

Attached to various meanings and agendas, liberalism on the one hand is perceived as a progressively humanitarian endeavor whose mission is to bestow peace and democracy unto states in extreme turmoil. On the other hand, liberalism is viewed as a homogenizing scheme, seeking to maintain the global power and self-interests of Western entities. The subsequent sections serve to outline these two opposing views and provide a comprehensive understanding of the way liberal ideology is situated within international discourse.

Proponents of Liberalism

Proponents of liberalism argue that liberalism is fundamentally optimistic, calling for positive interaction among international actors and chances for a peaceful world (Morgan, 2013). In a liberal framework, international politics is an evolving atmosphere characterized by interdependence, cooperation, peace, and security. Under acceptable models of liberal political systems and domestic groups, states are viewed as being more capable of achieving international cooperation. Proponents also view capitalism as an additional benefit of liberalism, due to its perceived ability to cultivate wealth and higher living standards. The production and accumulation of wealth are thus more rapid and efficient if private actors run economic activities in accordance with the "dictates" of markets (Morgan 2013). Promoting a capitalist or 'free trade' society further circumvents the possibility of war, thereby reducing the influence of elites who have historically been devoted to military

conquests and national glory (Solingen 1998). Proponents also defend that liberalism is marked by a strong support for democracy, which is crucial to the legitimacy of governmental systems. Western nations have historically upheld this belief by advocating democracy as a means to restore peace within a region. In this vein, scholars contend that sovereignty is not simply a right to national autonomy; it is the responsibility of a government to treat its society with decency. Failure to do so may result in international intervention. Said another way, liberalism refuses to endorse violence as a coercive method unless the political order in question denies all opportunity for peaceful, democratic transition (Martin 1948).

Proponents of liberalism finally observe that liberal ideology supports rights and opportunities for women, religious freedoms, and civil rights, among many others. They argue that within liberal ideology, the preservation of human rights is one of its most salient characteristics, as it is derived from states' long-held concerns about how their prominent religious and ethnic groups are treated by neighboring states. Diplomatic pressures, military interventions, and peace agreements further agitate such concerns (Krasner 1999). Where human rights are involved, liberalism further encourages self-determination, or the acceptance of the present world order's norms and values, over separatism, claiming that states should de-emphasize sovereignty and autonomy. Because most countries are multiethnic, endorsing separatism would invite chaotic dissolutions by fracturing the unity of international states.

In examining the arguments in favor of liberalism, it is clear that proponents view this ideology as a means of fostering international cohesion. States are generally non-strict about their autonomy and center sovereignty on their government's obligation to treat its society with decency. A nation's inability to do this, however, may result in international intervention. Liberalism further commits itself to propagating capitalist and democratic values on a global scale, and in addition

to defending human rights, the notion of self-determination is also one of its essential components. The above claims portray liberalism as a wholly optimistic approach that holds the interests of states at heart and offers a resolution for enhancing world peace. I however contend that liberalism's attempts to reduce state autonomy, expand capitalism and democracy, and augment international cooperation convey a fundamental hypocrisy. Proponents of liberalism fail to deeply examine *whom* the values of capitalism and democracy are modeled after, *who* benefits from promoting such norms, and *which* entities bear their repercussions. This nod towards world homogenization reveals a colonial remnant within modern-day liberalism that reinforces global White supremacy.

Opponents of Liberalism

In contrast to its proponents, opponents of liberalism defend that the ideology reflects Western dominance. In its more forceful version, liberalism is an updated expression of Western imperialism; a rationalization of hegemonic efforts to spread Western values so that the global environment remains palatable for the West. As Ayers (2009) asserts, "In particular, the regime of 'democratisation' and the curtailing of democratic freedom constitute a principal means through which imperial rule is articulated." This means that Western governments are consistently eager to see the overturn of numerous political systems along with a drastic alteration of their social and economic structures. Ayers further refutes the notion of self-determination that liberalism's proponents support. For Ayers, self-determination is a concept based in non-autonomy and signifies the freedom to "embrace rules, norms, and principles of the emerging liberal global order."

Opponents of liberalism further observe that Western ideas of democracy do not well align with other cultural milieus (Faust 2013). In this vein, liberalism possesses an inherent favoritism towards the Western colonial state. Baudrillard (1975) argues that the emphasis on capitalism, for

instance, acts as a Western lens through which peripheral societies are perceived, therefore obstructing the cycles of symbolic exchange that mark other “Third-World” states. Robinson and Tormey (2009) likewise posit that when liberalism assumes a mission of ‘global justice,’ aiming to instill Western cultural norms and values, it imposes a ‘global-local’ conception that reproduces colonial epistemology. This enables a Western reasoning that demonizes non-liberal societies as failed states that are corrupt, lacking, and insufficiently stable.

In summary, opponents of liberalism contend that the ideology reflects Western hegemonic modes of influence. For opponents, the notion of self-determination is based in the freedom to accept rules, norms, and values that align with those of Western global powers. Liberalism as a mission of global justice further alienates states by ‘otherizing’ them and thereby emulating colonial epistemologies and practices. While opponents of liberalism thoroughly unearth liberalism’s Western origins and name the violence it launches on other states, they do not adequately locate the factors that continue to sustain liberal longevity.

The two aforementioned positions on liberalism provide a helpful overview on the strengths as well as pitfalls of liberal ideology. I however believe that scholars who take a more critical standpoint on liberalism effectively consider its negative reverberations, which contradict aims of world peace and international cooperation. While it is arguable that liberalism, like any ideology, may contain fallacies, there is a marked distinction between “international cooperation” and “international cooperation with Western nation-states.” Thus, I concur with opponents who suggest that liberalism promotes colonial epistemologies and practices that distort the functions of perceived “weaker” entities rather than honoring their self-governance and interests. To expand this body of thought further, I identify the particular elements on which liberalism thrives: primitivism, patronization, and the manipulation of power. Identifying these elements will help

contextualize the way liberalism, like White citizenry, has served to dislodge Black unification efforts and will further sustain my claim that liberalism is rooted in a colonial enterprise that maintains global White supremacy. In the sections below, I provide a timeline for the demise of the Pan-African Movement by first discussing the detriments of British colonization on Ghanaian infrastructure.

The Negative Outcomes of Colonialism on Ghana’s Infrastructure

British colonization unequivocally issued disastrous repercussions within Ghana, the West African nation formerly known as the “Gold Coast.” Under colonial rule, Ghana was afflicted with adverse barriers, including economic instability, a weakened sense of nationalism, and neocolonial subjugation. In the subsequent paragraphs, I delineate the ways these repercussions sent Ghana’s infrastructure into a state of disarray, eventually birthing Pan-African revolt. So far I have argued that in the international sphere, liberal ideology is a renewed form of colonialism that obstructs Black unification and relies on primitivism, patronization, and the manipulation of power. Using Ghana as a case study, the following sections detail prevalent commonalities between liberalism, White citizenry, and colonialism, ultimately naming liberalism as a source of the Pan-African Movement’s dissolution.

Economic Instability: The Result of Colonial Exploitation

Prior to its colonization, Ghana was a flourishing region until colonial rule provoked economic decline and political instability within its infrastructure.¹ British colonizers rationalized that Ghanaian inhabitants were unfit to govern themselves and espoused the notion that ‘backwards’ nations required the guidance of the

¹ Robert M. Price, “Neo-Colonialism and Ghana’s Economic Decline: A Critical Assessment,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, no. 18 (1984): 164.

dominant world order. Colonial authorities hence established vicious oppressive and exploitative systems by maintaining that their presence in Ghana would bolster economic development and prepare Ghana for eventual independence.² However, British siege of the Gold Coast only maximized political control and economic profits for British colonial authorities. Systematic corruption thus emerged due to the imposition of a Western institutional system that bore deeply conflicting values and norms with that of Ghanaian society.³ Even after independence, Ghana was economically fragile as a result of colonial exploitation and had no choice but to remain largely dependent on the assistance of Western nations.⁴

Weakened Nationalism

British colonization further brought about the reduction of Ghanaian nationalism. Colonial rule over Ghana shaped and conditioned Ghanaian nationalism in a way such that within a span of fifty years, four of the country's regions were successively colonized. Five variants of nationalism thus emerged: the Colony (coastal region), the Ashanti (central region), the Northern Territories (northern region), the Trans-Volta Togoland (eastern region), and Nkrumah's dual Pan-African struggle.⁵ The above nationalisms can more succinctly be classified into two categories: the holistic nationalists, which involved Nkrumah's struggle, and the sub-nationalists, which encompassed the four remaining Ghanaian regions. Here, I underscore that colonial inhibition of Ghanaian nationalism is no different from White

citizenry's stratification of Africans and African Americans in the United States.

Holistic nationalists aimed to advance the colonized state. They viewed British colonial rule as a point of opposition and held strong beliefs in equal opportunity and social transformation. They additionally promoted Pan-Africanism and solidarity between colonized and oppressed peoples, irrespective of one's class and ethnic background. Holistic nationalists also viewed mass politicization and education as foundations for political mobilization.⁶ In contrast, sub-nationalists viewed holistic nationalists—rather than British colonial rule—as objects of opposition and espoused the system of British colonization. They believed strongly in social stratification and reform and fought against Pan-African ideals. They further viewed preexisting Ghanaian relations as a reason for political mobilization and sought to eradicate unity between colonized and oppressed peoples.⁷

The existence of these varying nationalisms gave rise to the diffusion of Ghana's sociopolitical cohesion and authority. By the 1950s, the likelihood that any of the organized political forces—colonial authorities, holistic nationalists, and sub-nationalists—could implement its own political goals remained very low.⁸ For example, the rule of British colonial authorities depended on their control of Ghana's societal instruments—the civil service, police service, judiciary, and armed forces. The power of holistic nationalists rested on their ability to galvanize the masses into action, so that Ghana would be ungovernable by colonial authorities. Finally, sub-nationalist preeminence relied on an alliance with native rulers and non-cooperation with holistic nationalists.⁹ In particular, the opposition between Ghanaian nationalists and sub-nationalists illustrates the division essential to the preservation of colonial rule. As long as the Ghanaian nation-state remained stratified, this

² Abayomi Azikiwe, "Africa Still Struggles Against Imperialism," p. 1.

³ Victor Le Vine, "Corruption in Ghana," *Transition*, no. 47 (1975): 50.

⁴ Megan Behrent, "Ama Ata Aidoo: Independence and Disillusionment in Postcolonial Ghana," p. 2.

⁵ Kwame Nimako, "Nkrumah, African Awakening, and Neo-colonialism: How Black America Awakened Nkrumah and Nkrumah Awakened Black America," *The Black Scholar*, no. 40 (2010): 59.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁹ *Ibid.*

would forestall its nationalism and continue to enable British colonial domination.

Neocolonialism

Although Ghana achieved independence on March 6, 1957, this did not secure its actual autonomy from centuries-long exploitation under colonial powers.¹⁰ Neocolonialism became yet another obstacle that Ghana had to overcome in its struggle to obtain freedom and sovereignty. Nkrumah defines neocolonialism as follows:

“The essence of neo-colonialism is that the state which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and its political policy is directed from outside. (Nkrumah).”¹¹

To better understand neocolonialism, we must observe three of its key components: neocolonialism as a consequence of an underdeveloped nation’s status within the world trade system or in the periphery of the world system; neocolonialism as a means of military force to endow countries with imperial ambitions the capacity to subjugate or overthrow less powerful governments; and neocolonialism as a form of bribery used on local populations—particularly politicians, soldiers, and public servants who serve as agents for imperial powers.¹²

The implications of neocolonialism’s first component, a nation’s peripheral status in the world system, meant that Ghana would be limited in its capacity to produce adequate resources for the development of its physical and social infrastructure.¹³ In other words, powerful nations

¹⁰ Norman E. Hodges, “Neo-colonialism: The New Rape of Africa,” *The Black Scholar*, no. 3 (1972): 12.

¹¹ Abayomi Azikiwe, “Africa Still Struggles Against Imperialism,” p. 2-3.

¹² Kwame Nimako, “Nkrumah, African Awakening, and Neo-colonialism,” 55.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 65.

would be able to place trade sanctions on more vulnerable nations and use “development aid” as a means to coerce them into dependency. This thus inhibited Ghana’s ability to lend assistance to other countries in need. As a result of being deemed a weaker state, the implications of neocolonialism’s second component meant that powerful countries could threaten to reverse the acquisition of Ghana’s independence and invade its territory. It further meant that Ghana’s aims to self-improve and achieve collective freedom would be hindered.¹⁴ However, where direct intervention was not an option, the third implication of neocolonialism involved the strategic bribery of local populations. This meant that politicians, soldiers, and public servants would be paid to operate as agents for imperial powers, which became a very effective mode of subverting the Pan-African Movement in Ghana.¹⁵ Neocolonialism, a direct remnant of colonialism, overall demonstrates a hegemonic objective to not only keep countries like Ghana dependent on the outside assistance of imperial forces, but to also reduce the individual autonomy of weaker nation-states. This objective is congruent with liberal ideology, which as we recall, advocates self-determination over separatism and sovereignty. In the same vein that British colonization was never meant to erode Ghana’s underdevelopment or boost its self-reliance, liberalism seeks to espouse a global environment that solidifies Western norms and primacy.

Kwame Nkrumah’s Resistance

“The right of a people to decide their own destiny, to make their way in freedom, is not to be measured by the yardstick of color or degree of social development. It is an inalienable right of peoples, which they are powerless to exercise when forces, stronger than they themselves, by whatever means, for whatever reasons, take this right away from them. If there is to be a criterion

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

*of a people's preparedness for Self-Government, then I say it is their readiness to assume the responsibilities of ruling themselves... never in the history of the world has an alien ruler granted self-rule to a people on a silver platter."*¹⁶

~Kwame Nkrumah

Every society is comprised of two classes: a class that rules and a class that is ruled. Once in a while, an individual rises who challenges the injustices imposed by the rule of the elite class; in the case of Ghanaian colonization, that individual was Kwame Nkrumah. This next section covers Kwame Nkrumah's leadership by detailing his mission to attain Ghanaian independence and expand Pan-African unity in the face of colonial rule. We must however bear in mind that Nkrumah's eventual demise conveys just how unyielding the grip of colonialism is, and informs us of its false intent to encourage Ghanaian autonomy and development. As I later explain, colonialism's discouragement of state autonomy also emerges within liberal ideology. We continue to bear in mind that liberalism reflects White citizenry on a global scale and serves as the gatekeeper of Western approval towards other nation-states; given that these states follow democratic, capitalist, and humanitarian values that refrain from threatening Western empire.

Background

One of Ghana's most celebrated leaders, Kwame Nkrumah was born in the western region of the Gold Coast (later named Ghana) on September 21, 1909, growing up under the established British colonial system.¹⁷ After attending primary and secondary school and receiving teacher training, Nkrumah traveled to America to pursue his education at Lincoln University, a historically Black college in the state of Pennsylvania, where he obtained degrees in Education, Sociology, Philosophy, Political Science,

¹⁶ Ibid., 62.

¹⁷ Abayomi Azikiwe, "Africa & the Struggle Against Imperialism: 40 Years: after Kwame Nkrumah," p. 1.

and Theology.¹⁸ It was Nkrumah's experiences at Lincoln that helped shape his outlook on African nationalism.¹⁹ Leading figures of nationalist and leftist movements, such as the African Students Association and the Universal Negro Improvement Association, particularly drew Nkrumah's interest. Some of these figures included Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. Du Bois, and C.L.R. James, to note a few.²⁰

In 1945 Nkrumah traveled to England, where he soon began working alongside George Padmore, a former member of the Communist International. Both Nkrumah and Padmore worked towards organizing the Fifth Pan-African Congress, which would be held in Manchester later that year. This African Diasporic collaboration resulted in the formation of *A Declaration to the Colonial Peoples of the World*, a document drafted by Nkrumah, Padmore, and Du Bois and approved by more than 200 delegates.²¹ The declaration would serve as a key tool in calling on intellectuals and professional classes of colonized nations to awaken to their responsibilities.

Struggle for Independence

After spending 12 years overseas, Nkrumah returned to Ghana in December of 1947 on the invitation of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC). He was appointed as the secretary of the UGCC and transformed the organization into a mass nationalist movement.²² Three years after his induction, however, Nkrumah was arrested by colonial authorities and sentenced to a year of prison for mobilizing a general strike demanding independence. Soon after his release from prison, he headed Ghana's transitional government, which

¹⁸ Jesse Benjamin, "Decolonizing Nationalism: Reading Nkrumah and Nyerere's Pan-African Epistemology," *Journal of Emerging Knowledge on Emerging Markets*, no. 3, (2011): 234-235.

¹⁹ Ibid., 236.

²⁰ Abayomi Azikiwe, "Africa & the Struggle Against Imperialism: 40 Years: after Kwame Nkrumah," p. 2.

²¹ Abayomi Azikiwe, "Africa & the Struggle Against Imperialism: 40 Years: after Kwame Nkrumah," p. 2.

²² Kwame Nimako, "Nkrumah, African Awakening, and Neo-colonialism," 54.

would later lead the country to full independence on March 6, 1957.²³ Nkrumah believed that Ghana's independence would be meaningless if it did not involve the full unity and liberation of Africa, but he faced a dual struggle. On the one hand, he had to face internal Ghanaian/African political and cultural dynamics to disseminate his message of African unity. In order to do this, he first needed to succeed in Ghana. On the other hand, Nkrumah had to transfer his message of African unity in a manner that would delegitimize British colonial rule.²⁴ Nkrumah thus employed three symbols to solidify his message of African awakening. These symbols encompassed the Red Rooster or Cock, which signified Ghana/Africa's wake-up call to reclaim power; the Black Star, which signified Ghanaian arising, independence, and social and economic progress; and the kente cloth, which signified a national dress code.²⁵ Nkrumah's struggle for independence was thus part of the broader Pan-African Movement and did not end with Ghana's political independence. He sought to redefine Africa by proposing new cultural and political reconfigurations within the continent in addition to demanding an *African* representation of Africa.²⁶ This endeavor ultimately made it possible to extend solidarity towards subjects trapped under colonial control.

Collapse of the Nkrumah Regime

Because of Nkrumah's mission to expand African unity across the continent and the Diaspora, imperialists targeted Ghana and other progressive African states in order to stifle and reverse African movements that promoted revolutionary pan-Africanism. Through the collective efforts of the United States and CIA, Nkrumah was overthrown in a bloody military coup in February of 1966, which was executed in the

²³ Megan Behrent, "Ama Ata Aidoo: Independence and Disillusionment in Postcolonial Ghana," p. 1.

²⁴ Jesse Benjamin, "Decolonizing Nationalism," 240.

²⁵ Kwame Nimako, "Nkrumah, African Awakening, and Neo-colonialism," 60-61, 67.

²⁶ Jesse Benjamin, "Decolonizing Nationalism," 241.

name of restoring freedom and democracy.²⁷ What is interesting to observe is the timing of Nkrumah's arrival to Ghana along with his eventual overthrow and exile. Nkrumah's arrival coincided with the decline of the United Kingdom as a colonial power and the rise of the U.S. as a new hegemonic power. Yet after restoring Ghana's political independence, Nkrumah was eventually overthrown through an armed revolt instigated by the U.S. *and* with the approval of Britain.²⁸ This U.S. and British collaboration signified the West's intentions to suppress Ghanaian autonomy and demolish the gains of anti-colonial struggles. Such an understanding once more elucidates the duplicity of Western powers who falsely claimed to strengthen the advancement and independence of 'severely misguided' nations.

Colonialism: The Predecessor of Liberalism and White Citizenry

In the previous sections I used Ghana as a case study to explain colonialism's disastrous impacts on the country's infrastructure and Kwame Nkrumah's unsuccessful campaign for African liberation. I now move to analyze the main commonalities between liberalism and colonialism. At first glance, few might consider that liberalism is another colonial enterprise that seeks to reinforce Western preeminence and halt Black unification efforts. Liberalism, after all, is thought to promote democracy and humanitarian rights to ensure a more peaceful world. It is also the very ideology that has helped undermine Western colonialism and now seeks to enhance development and living standards throughout the globe. Upon closer examination, however, Ghana's Pan-African struggle reveals that liberalism bears inextricable similarities to colonialism. In this chapter I have argued that liberalism is an ideology based in colonialism that manifests as a global form of White citizenry by endorsing Western normalized

²⁷ Norman E. Hodges, "Neo-colonialism," 17.

²⁸ Insight, "The Struggle Against Imperialism in the Context of Nkrumaist Development Paradigm," p. 1.

values. The subsequent paragraph delves into how the two logics are connected.

Both liberalism and White citizenry share an inherent aim to homogenize; to instill normalized values that are deemed acceptable and emulative. Within a liberal paradigm that is interconnected with White citizenship, homogenization takes place through instilling democratic values to render states fit for international cooperation and to produce first-class citizens. Yet in a strict colonial context, this agenda is no different from civilizing. As a resistance mechanism against colonial pervasion, Black unification stands opposite of liberalism and White citizenry's solidification of Western imperialism, therefore becoming a target of destruction. Just as White citizenry incites friction among Africans and African Americans, liberalism instigated the eventual downfall of Nkrumah and other Pan-African leaders. This not only disassembled Pan-African efforts, but also stifled solidarity between Africans and African Americans that would carry for generations to come. By therefore implementing the divide and conquer tactic, both liberalism and White citizenry find their origins in colonialism.

Both logics further regard 'backwards' nations (governments non-aligned with Western democratic values) as incapable of effectively governing themselves and warrant outside intervention and assistance. Liberalism and colonialism also de-emphasize state autonomy and sovereignty, for liberal ideology underscores international cooperation over state separatism. Even though liberalism appears to promote the advancement of weaker states by advocating higher living standards, economic wealth, and decent treatment of a nation's citizens, it strays from highlighting state autonomy for the sake of international cohesion. If state autonomy were a true objective, Western intervention in Ghana would not have occurred in response to Ghana's Pan-African struggle, which was a clear point of contention for dominant powers. We can trace this same line of thought within colonialism. While colonial invaders repeatedly declared their

presence in Ghana as a means for Ghanaian progression, a neocolonial framework exposes their true intentions to forestall Ghanaian independence. In actuality, colonial invaders evoked more devastation than they did national restoration.

Primitivism, Patronization, and the Manipulation of Power

Earlier in this chapter I alluded to three elements that help sustain liberal ideology: primitivism, patronization, and the manipulation of power. I now arrive at interrogating *how* these elements help magnify liberal influence within the international arena and subdue Black unification in the process. First, I draw our focus towards primitivism. In his work, *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill states,

“Liberalism is meant to apply only to human beings in the maturity of their faculties. We are not speaking of children, or of young persons below the age which the law may fix as that of manhood or womanhood. Those who are still in a state to require being taken care of by others, must be protected against their own actions as well as against external injury. For the same reason, we may leave out of consideration those backward states of society in which the race itself may be considered as in its nonage.”²⁹

Mill's words demonstrate the embedded assumptions of primitivism not only within colonialism, but also within liberal ideology. Liberalism's goal to extend democracy towards other nations simultaneously invokes two notions: the assumed superiority of the West and the inferiority of non-Western nations who fail to exhibit democratic practices. This dichotomy

²⁹ Uday Chandra, "Liberalism and Its Other: The Politics of Primitivism in Colonial and Postcolonial Indian Law," *Law and Society Review*, no. 1 (2013):135.

further divulges a tacit *racial* superiority within Western liberal thinking. As NCNC (National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons) leader Nnamdi Azikiwe stated in response to colonial injustices,

“Being Black people does not mean that we are impervious to justice and decency. Being White does not make colonial Governors paragons of perfection.”³⁰

Following Western logic, so long as ‘weaker,’ Third-World nations exist, liberalism’s normative practice of democracy will always be in demand.

Patronization, the next element liberalism relies on, is intertwined with the idea of primitivism. We may conceptualize this connection by remembering that primitivism *leads* to patronization; in other words, when a state is labeled ‘backwards,’ it necessitates restructuring. To further clarify, primitivism is the notion of *perceiving* a state as uncivil, while patronization *acts* on this perception by means of external force to alter the values and systems of the state in question. As John Stuart Mill posits,

“They have to be taught self-government...protected against their own actions as well as against external injury...their improvement cannot come from themselves, but must be super-inducted from without...(by a government) which possesses force but seldom uses it: a parental despotism or aristocracy.”³¹

Once a state is deemed primitive, it must be rescued from itself; this calls for the protection of foreign intervention. Liberalism justifies this course of action particularly when dealing with human rights and self-governance. If a state fails to treat its society with decency or exhibit universal values rooted in a Western liberal episteme, it must be rectified by external powers. The constant need to

³⁰ Jesse Benjamin, “Decolonizing Nationalism,” 252

³¹ Uday Chandra, “Liberalism and Its Other,” 138.

‘protect’ and ‘correct’ thus indicates an element of patronization that liberalism uses to thrive.

The manipulation of power is a final element that sustains liberalism. In the previous section I asserted that while liberalism appears to promote state self-reliance, we must note its divergence from advocating individual sovereignty in favor of international cohesion. I believe we must question this feature of liberalism more closely. When we refer back to history, the sovereignty of Western nations has seldom been called into question. Why, then, should the sovereignty of other states be maligned? Opponents of liberalism would classify this rejection of sovereignty as a ploy for “making the global environment more palatable for the West,” by only preserving Western values and hegemony. Italian political scientist Gaetano Mosca further reminds us that power cannot be legitimized through mere possession of it; it must also be justified by a legal and moral basis. Western international actors use a “moral” liberal ideology to minimize state sovereignty, which serves as a manipulative strategy to distribute power in such a way that favors Western nations.³² Western nations consequently benefit the most by setting the global precedent for normalized values and practices, thus fortifying their power and the dissemination of liberal ideology. In this way then, liberalism thrives on the manipulation of power. These elements largely convey that liberalism upholds global White supremacy.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have argued that liberalism is rooted in colonialism and promotes Western cultural norms. Furthermore, liberalism, like White citizenry, has unsettled Black unification by impeding Pan-African agendas through primitivism, patronization, and the manipulation of power. Proponents of liberalism hold that liberalism is fundamentally optimistic, calling for a peaceful world and cooperation among

³² Gaetano Mosca, *The Ruling Class*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1939), 70.

international actors, in addition to advocating human rights and the global proliferation of capitalist and democratic values. Opponents of liberalism, on the other hand, believe that liberalism merely reflects Western dominance and that in its more forceful version, is an updated expression of Western imperialism. They believe that liberalism rationalizes the hegemonic effort to spread Western values, so that the global environment remains convenient for Western nations. While I understand each of the argumentative definitions on what liberalism *is*, I more so comply with opponents who contend that liberalism is a Western hegemonic ideology.

Using the British colonization of Ghana as a case study, I have identified specific commonalities between liberalism, white citizenry, and colonialism. Both liberalism and white citizenry share an immediate urge to homogenize by imposing normalized practices. However, Black unification stands in opposition to Western imperialism by defying Black exploitation and division. In doing this, Black unification becomes a threat for the West to defuse. In the same manner that white citizenry spurs tensions between Africans and African Americans and elicits division between the two ethnicities, liberalism caused the eventual downfall of Pan-African leaders, ultimately dismantling the Pan-African Movement and complicating future solidarity between Africans and African Americans. By implementing this division, both liberalism and white citizenry find their origins in colonialism. They further espouse the idea that nations regarded as 'backwards,' or incapable of governing themselves, require protection and thus warrant outside intervention. Finally, both colonialism and liberalism diverge from promoting state sovereignty and autonomy. Uncovering these similarities prove useful for locating particular elements that sustain liberal ideology in addition to pinpointing how liberalism and white citizenry work to displace Black unification efforts. I have argued that these elements involve primitivism, patronization, and the manipulation of power.

Primitivism appears within liberal ideology when nations are believed unfit to self-govern, thus calling for help and protection. This element manifests through liberalism's aim to extend democracy towards other nations; a gesture that invokes two notions: the assumed superiority of the West and the inferiority of non-Western nations who must beseech democracy to better practice self-governance. Patronization, an additional element liberalism relies on, intersects with primitivism. We may understand this connection by recognizing that primitivism *leads* to patronization—once a state is deemed 'backwards,' it necessitates restructuring. The consistent impulse to rectify classified weaker nations is thus an indication of the patronization that liberalism uses to thrive. The last element liberalism relies on, the manipulation of power, is apparent when liberalism strays from promoting state sovereignty for purposes of international cohesion. The erosion of state sovereignty is a manipulative strategy to distribute power in such a way that favors Western nations. This power enables the West to set the global precedent for acceptable norms and practices, thus fortifying the dissemination of liberal ideology. These elements ultimately reveal that liberalism encourages global white supremacy.

Earlier on in this chapter I asserted that if we consider liberalism's inextricable similarities to colonialism and colonialism's devastation of Ghana's infrastructure, it would then hold that liberal ideology is non-ideal for *all* nation-states and only serves to mold the rest of the international community according to Western tradition. In this vein, a Black unification that is oppositional to liberalism's homogenizing tactic, thus threatens the empire of Western dominance. When considering the mission to spread liberalism to other non-democratic countries we must critically interrogate *which* actors are promoting preferred norms and values for the international community and at *whose* expense these norms are being enacted. Liberalism suppresses the agency of nations who would prefer to govern themselves without

reference to an overarching doctrine of governance—as seen in the Pan-African Movement in Ghana. We must therefore keep in mind that while ostensibly innocuous, liberalism is an ideology fueled with self-interests that aim to

progress Western hegemony and halt Black unification. The Pan-African Movement, a Black unification struggle, did not conform to Western imperialism, and therefore led to its collapse.

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