

## Colonial Legacy and Succession Frameworks in Africa: A contextual and empirical analysis

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### ABSTRACT

The paper is an examination of how colonial legacy influenced state formation and succession frameworks in post independent Africa. Succession conflicts seem to be a perennial problem in modern African states compared to traditional African states. This study was based on 18 qualitative in-depth interviews conducted with key informants using the purposive sampling technique, complemented by extensive document review. The findings ascertain how colonial legacy influenced modern African states succession framework and the architectures of administration and governance. The paper passionately asserts that, the succession problem in Africa seem to be characteristic of the post-colonial state, resulting in gradual attrition of the constitutive, regulative rules, institutional processes and mechanism for succession leading to political volatility, illegitimate governments and conflict. The findings also unequivocally isolate Zimbabwe as a victim of colonial legacy and leadership egocentrism. In its recommendations, the paper argues that the succession challenge faced by the continent will always hound succession trends and responsive administration, unless broad based reforms are instituted to dismantle the effects of colonial legacy embedded in African states political systems.

**Keywords:** colonial legacy; colonialism; democracy; succession; state administration

### INTRODUCTION

Many African countries gained their independence after a protracted liberation struggle. It is understandable and worth noting that after the decolonisation process, African nationalists inherited the post-colonial state with all its colonial coercive apparatus and legacies. More so, for they became the rulers and masters of their peoples and countries and were pre-occupied by continuity with some changes. Colonialism significantly impacted on the political and economic conditions of contemporary Africa. Post-colonial African states resemble a western model as nationalists adopted the more centralized and authoritarian system of administration of their colonisers. Post-colonial Africa seems to be characteristic of ethnic based exclusion and marginalisation as stated reverted back to Defacto one-party system where opposition parties are highly restricted. The paper acknowledges that Africa experienced brutal, exploitative and oppressive forms of colonialism and that the act

of suppressing left negatively impacting legacy on the African continent. This paper, therefore, revealed how the legacy of colonialism impacted on post-independence Africa's institutions and systems of governance in view of the present succession and state administration anxieties [1].

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The paper notes that colonialism had considerable influence on shaping the political landscape of the African continent. Colonisation as for is a practice of political domination, which involves the subjugation and oppression of one people to another. Colonialism involves political, economic control and dominance over a dependent territory. The term colony comes from the Latin word *Colonus*, meaning farmer, this concept of a colony entails that the practice of colonialism usually involved the transfer of population to a new territory, where the settlers lived as permanent inhabitants of the jurisdiction while

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maintaining political allegiance to their country of origin. Therefore, a scrutiny of the phenomenon of colonisation is necessary to appreciate the degree to which it influenced and impacted on succession and transitioning frameworks in Africa.

### The concept of succession politics

Conversely, colonial legacy can be differently defined, as for, colonial legacy entails "heritage", "conclusion", "outcomes" and "influence." Generally, it includes what the colonial bosses have granted to the African states in the areas of economy, social, religious, legislative issues and many more. Ndege suggests that, colonial conquest led to loss of sovereignty as colonial rulers' supplanted indigenous leaders and this was one of the ironies and incongruities of British indirect rule. Based on empty platitudes, British indirect rule often led to the recruitment of British collaborative agents and porters into leadership positions [2].

The colonial administration through council of chiefs, local courts and local native councils was a ridicule of popular government. The paper acknowledged that tyranny and semi-totalitarianism were entrenched, inculcated into the political arrangement of Africa using the colonial administrative authoritative apparatus that were intended to keep African states in a subordinate position, that law and order, advanced the interest of British industrialist aggregation. Acknowledge that the present political arrangement of the continent is by all accounts the immediate impression of the colonial political framework and expansionism incredibly impacting on governmental issues of the continent by supplanting indigenous foundations by "bizarre and strange administration of white supremacy.

Colonialism had some influence in the moulding of African states transitioning and succession frameworks. The first generation leaders embraced and inherited the systems, institutions and laws of the colonial master without tailoring suitable systems to the new political environment. Africa had democratic culture in the pre-colonial time which later was destroyed through the impact of subjugation, imperialism and neo-expansionism. Curiously noticed that the "contemporary state in Africa is a remnant of a colonially imposed framework which created ethnic and tyrant based political culture".

It is worth noting that colonialists were neither interested in promoting flourishing democratic systems in Africa nor prepared African states to administer themselves effectively in the post-independence era. Also, plainly noticed that "the colonial state in Africa was a tyrant bureaucratic contraption of control, which was not planned to be a school of democracy. As attested by, it demonstrates the way that the state was utilized as an instrument of exploitation through the colonial period [3].

During the colonial era, there was no such idea of popular participation as; at independence African leaders inherited colonially instigated institutions and systems of government which were seen. As "negligence of popular interests." For, it is because of this malpractice that African leaders have been exposed, inter alia to evils of defilement and dictatorship since the time of independence.

The paper posits that, the systems African states inherited from their colonisers were undemocratic, authoritarian as their very purpose was to exploit the continent's resources through employing undemocratic systems of administration which were forcefully imposed from the top. In other words, colonisers failed to consider the interests, needs as well as realities of African people. The paper notes that the colonial experience of post-independence African leaders greatly impacted their way of administration in a highly tyrannical manner. Brutality and exploitation of the colonialists' system of administration was inculcated and imbedded in the minds of anti-colonial leaders of the time who later became leaders of independent African states.

Moreover, echoes that the notion of ethnicity left behind by the colonial powers impacted on the overall political system of African states. Ethnic division and fault lines which were multiplied by colonial system left persistent rivalry and conflict in the continent thereby resulting in exclusion and marginalisation of minority tribes in African political societies in asserts that the fragmentation of ethnic identities into several states and the uneven socio-economic development among several ethnic groups became an obstacle to manage diversity. Instead of being rectified and resolved, the colonial legacy has been exacerbated in the post-colonial period as politicians have exploited the ethnic fault lines for political expediency [4].

The colonial administrators and political elites for made decisions on behalf of the indigenous population without consulting them. Inheriting from this monopolized authoritarian system, African political parties adopted a top-down, autocratic organisational structure. Contends that "African political parties started in the non-democratic based setting of colonial rule which was neither just nor authentic."

This demonstrates that African party framework has acquired the undemocratic colonial tradition, even though multi-party framework was presented in Africa, it was not genuinely exercised. In spite of the fact that parties can emerge, the environment has not been conducive to compete and hold power for state administration. Indeed, it is even entirely expected to see numerous opposition parties in Africa prohibited, condemned their exercises or undermined when contributing to national development policy [5].

### Post-independence governments and succession politics in Africa

Colonial Legacy has been any albatross on Africa's transitioning and succession frameworks, as the model of administration tends to be a semblance of the colonial state. Argues that, most post-independence governments distorted and perverted into one-party states or military tyrannies portrayed by defilement, corruption and inefficiency. Furthermore, any type of opposition to the incumbent faces savage abuse and detainment. In the same vein, reverberated that, democratising Africa turns out to be a very challenging task, as African rulers are known to be profoundly adulterated, which could be traced back to the legacy of expansionism. Colonial power's abhorrent socio-

political culture created the propensity for corruption in public institutions of contemporary Africa.

Against that background, the paper established that the existing corrupt and undemocratic behaviour of the contemporary leaders of Africa is the continuation of the imperialists' policies depicting authoritarianism, tyranny and corruption, exacerbating poverty and misgovernance in African countries is of the view that most African leaders enjoy political power as a means of accumulating wealth and power hence the greediness, selfishness and rent-seekingness of contemporary African rulers is an off shoot of colonial deeds [6].

Nationalist leaders should have sort to break with the past but most African Heads of State's primary target was on accomplishing power and less on making a just African society. It is from this leadership disposition that some African countries have come to occupy a precarious middle ground between tyranny and outright authoritarianism thus compromising majority rule system. Posits that following the post-liberation disillusionments on leadership and development, there was no assurance that dynamic and progressive liberation movements which fought for majority rule, social equity and justice will fundamentally foster a democratic and constitutional culture when in power. However, more than 23 years after the last independent state, contemporary African leaders seem to be engrossed in the realities of colonialism as colonial legacy perpetuated the proliferation of patron-client political systems making it difficult for leaders to re-design and reconfigure the institutions of governance.

Having examined how colonisation impacted on succession frameworks, the next section deals with the influence of colonial legacy on the interface of succession politics and state administration in contemporary Africa. The colonial form of government has been described as a ruling bureaucracy in the sense of government spearheaded by appointed officials. The major concern of this bureaucratic inheritance is the imbalance between the powers of the bureaucracy other political institutions. The colonial bureaucracy was viewed by "as a large, impersonal political structure that is indivisible and slow to change" as advanced by that the weaknesses of inherited public institutions have led to subdued legislatures and judiciaries which are essential to hold the government accountable. They have termed this phenomenon the enigma of development administration, based on the view that an effective administration is essential to accomplish progress since it can stifle or retard political, economic and social development of alternative centres of power [7].

## Presentation and analysis of findings

The data presented here is a triangulation of views obtained from in-depth interviews and documentary review with the view of obtaining a balanced argument. The research was based on non-probability sampling procedures and participants were selected because of convenience and their knowledge of the subject under study. For instance, politicians, think tanks, civil society and academia had an enhanced chance of being part of the sample in the thematic area of succession and state administration. The analysis was based mainly on how colonial

legacy influenced the efficacy of state administration in Africa. Thematic method as applied to this paper included six key procedures namely, transcribing, coding and reduction, identifying overarching themes, reviewing the themes, naming the themes involved characterizing and naming of themes for instance on how colonial legacy shaped succession patterns and state administration in Africa (Table 1).

Population group	Targeted	Actual
Executive	2	2
Legislature	3	3
Bureaucracy	4	3
Politburo members	4	2
Opposition parties	30	3
Think tanks	3	2
Academia	4	3
Total	60	18

**Table 1:** Interview response.

The researcher interviewed representatives of three political parties, representing 7.5% proportion of the total number of 40 opposition political parties as indicated in Table 1 above. The political parties represented in the respondent sample are only those that are represented in the House of Assembly. Whereas the researcher appreciates that political parties have various formal and informal avenues of influencing state administration, Parliament remains the most viable framework for members to hold the executive accountable. Section 117 of the Constitution provides that Parliament shall be responsible for ensuring that governmental institutions and organs at both national and sub-national level are bound by the Constitution. In the categories, the response rate was over 75% and in all those cases data collection saturation was reached. Any interview above the saturation point would therefore not be of research information value but rather constitute a data collection exercise only without offering a corresponding qualitative value [8].

## Analyses of findings

The section focuses on how colonial legacy influenced succession patterns and the efficacy of state administration in Africa. Think tanks and the Academia outlined that, the history of the continent was defined by the philosophy of communalism, where society owns the means of production as an entity. The sentiments were supported, who strongly asserted that, execrably, the conclusive effect of colonisation has deflected the conditions of Africa and has not recuperated from

the overwhelming effect of colonisation much after independence.

The colonial state conveyed together a radicalised and tribalised power, as this represent an antecedent of stateless countries eminent in present day Africa. In a sense, the post-colonial administration turned out to be extensively increasingly absolutist and despotic despite the influential legacy of the Westminster model.

According to the think tanks and Academia, the Westminster model was characterised by a ceremonial president, executive Prime minister, Parliament and the Judiciary. A member of the opposition parties averred.

The Westminster model according to the paper, seem to have all the tenets of promoting democratic governance premised on the concept of separation of power and constitutionalism. The Academia and think tanks agreed that, it was better for African leaders to have assimilated and incorporated the positive variables before transplanting the system totally during the years of decolonisation [9].

“At independence, colonial legacy influenced state formation. Instead of propagating new governance systems, institutions, laws and structures, the political leadership, due to the independence euphoria and the triumph over white supremacy had little time to redesign governance structures that mirrored the aspirations of a new state. Due to lack of sovereign experience the leaders resorted back to defacto one dominant party state which was a major feature of the colonial state.”

The preceding views were echoed, who observes that when Britain granted independence to most African colonies in the 1950s and 1960s, it endeavoured to hand down Westminster's parliamentary system as an institutional legacy. For Tendi, in post-independence Africa, the Westminster model in most of the colonies vanished and was transplanted during the decolonisation progressions in Africa. In view of Tendi's preceding dispositions, the Westminster model of governance unsurprisingly malformed in the vast majority of former British colonies in Africa and single-party dominated rule and military coup d'états became the custom, since the system of the colonisers was impracticable in many former African colonies.

The African politicians envy white supremacy, notably, the manner in which they dominate the legitimacy use of violence through the police and army, silencing dissenting voices, also the way they manipulate the judiciary system to pass judgement in their favour and arm twist the legislature to make laws that promote their interest. The supplanting of the Westminster model resulted in the creation of an all-powerful presidency's office, which formulates, implements, monitors and evaluates policies. The adopted presidential system promoted democratic centralism and competitive electoral authoritarianism.

The paper argued that, the collapse of the model in most former British colonies in Africa heralded the prevalence of presidential systems of government where presidents are elected directly by the people offering stable and decisive government. Nonetheless, concentration of excessive powers in the presidency inculcating dictatorship mentality has become a

major hindrance to leadership change in Africa despite democracy activists insisting on presidential term limits. The respondents agreed that, colonial legacy had a profound effect on state formation in Africa, which arguably influenced succession patterns, trends, framework and the efficacy of state administration. The advocates of competitive electoral authoritarianism and presidentialism argued that, incumbent advantage led them to maintaining their consistence in winning elections in their respective countries. The main voices in this category were the members of the Executive, Politburo, 1 MP and 2 Permanent secretaries. The support of presidentialism by this category, signify the emergence of imperial presidents who are the law to themselves, thus disregarding the independence of the judiciary, the oversight role of the legislature and other oversight bodies [10].

On the other hand the other category of respondents which comprise of the Academia, think tanks, opposition parties, 2MPs, 1 permanent secretaries and civil society members argued that, colonial legacy remains undisputable albatross to the succession challenges bedevilling Africa. They advocated for the dismantling of the institutional legacy that was imitated by the African political leadership.

Based on the triangulation of view, the research established that, colonial legacy had a profound effect on the development of the political architecture of the continent. The first category seems to favour the perpetuation of a culture of centralism which is against redesigning and reconfiguration of governance institutions, systems and structures, as any change to the status quo will threaten their source of political survival. It is from the above analysis that the research notes that, colonial legacy fermented the challenge of non-succession and non-circulation of elite resulting in centralised state administration that promotes exclusive governance structures and systems in Africa for instance removal of presidential limits in Cameroon, Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe's intention to remove clauses on term limits and running mates.

## CONCLUSION

The paper concludes that colonialism inculcated elements of dictatorship, autocracy and authoritarianism in modern African states, as colonial legacy was the main influencing factor in state formation in post-independence Africa. African leaders envied the institutions and systems of governance which were used to emasculate the aspirations of Africans forcing the masses into submission reverting back to defacto and one party state devoid of succession. From the respondents' submissions, colonial legacy had profound effects on state formation, succession frameworks and the design state administration. To this end African states need to align their governance structures, institutions and systems with the best international standards of egalitarianism.

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