

## **AFRICA AND THE CHALLENGES OF MODERNITY**

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### **Abstract**

Africa since her contact with the colonizers has remained at a crossroad with her values and western values in an attempt to modernize. The African conception of modernization is grossly disillusioned and conflated with westernization. The African conception of modernity has severely hampered its development in addition to its negative influences on power, economy, science and technology and morality. A significant feature of modern society is the presence and manifestation of modernization concepts on the indigenous/native community (traditional society), characterized by the interchange of ideas, clashes of culture and spread of materialistic values. Due to the impacts of colonialism, neocolonialism and globalization, modernization is conceived, by Africans, as synonymous with westernization or Europeanization. This in turn, led African countries to lose their identity and indigenous cultural values. Consequently, as the reconstruction and development programs (policy and strategy formulations in various aspects) did not take these indigenous values as their anchoring point, many African countries could not reach the level of development where they can feed their people, keep their health and facilitate the development of infrastructure. It is on this basis that the paper argued that Africa must begin to relate with countries that have "de-westernized" and have attained some level of appreciable economic development. The focus is to evolve viable options for truly African culture.

**Keywords:** *Modernity, Africa, Westernization, Cultural Values, Civilization*

### **1. Introduction**

The history of a people's existence stem from their culture which shapes their lives and their perception about things. Behaviours, attitude, beliefs and actions of people are measured by how much the culture of the person is able to influence him. Ani (2013) expressly stated that "prior to colonialism, Africans as every other people with common identity and culture had their peculiar way of attaining knowledge and confronting life issues." However, with the dawn of western expansionism, western-oriented mode of behaviour and knowledge acquisition became objectified and universalized. African modernism as an aftermath of the European's colonization of Africa and the missionary enterprise of both the Christianization and Islamization of Africa is a product of foreign cultural incursion. Paradoxically, this same African modernity became the intellectual cultural means through which anti-colonial African consciousness was mediated; and

lately, on which the African renaissance is supposed to be constructed upon (Masilela, 2013).

The African societies by the tenets of their culture belong to the mythically structured societies. As such, their belief systems and their worldview are based on some mythologically founded theories. The mythological undertone of the African belief system neither makes it weird nor non factual. Present in these myths are pragmatic issues that operate successfully according to the African system. Among these are their understandings of their existence. The African see a lot tied to their existence. In fact the African do not seem to believe that human beings exist alone independent of those elements that make up their existence. This amounts to the attachment and the respect which the African man has for his environment. This respect is innate in the African culture and has helped save the African man from colossal damage. Nevertheless, the wind of enlightenment and modernism seems to tears Africa apart owing to the loss of identity by the mutilation of culture. Modernity has often been viewed as being in opposition to and representing a break from tradition. Gyekye (1997, 263), in *Contemporary Meaning of Modernity* pointed out that modernity is culture-dependent and, indeed, is linked to Western culture; particularly from the seventeenth century. He defines modernity as "the ideas, principles, and the ideals covering a whole range of human activities that have underpinned Western life and thought since the seventeenth century." Comprehensively, modernity refers to that movement of ideas, practices and institutions that originated in Europe and filled out with accretions from across the globe. This means that we should not conflate modernity with westernization. Olufemi notes that:

Modernity's philosophical discourse interests us because, ultimately, its most lasting impact has been the creation and wide dissemination of a new and radically different view of human nature unique to it, as well as pertinent values, practices and institutions that have promoted the efflorescence of this philosophical anthropology (Olufemi 2018)

To take modernity seriously we need a different genealogy of it in Africa. Historically, specifically in West Africa, Christianity was the vector for the introduction of modernity. Contrary to accepted wisdom, colonialism aborted the transition to Christian-inspired modernity that was afoot, under native agency, before formal colonialism. This means that when we think of the history of the relation between Africa and modernity, we should do so in terms of the Africa modernity relation before colonialism and the same relation after colonialism. Our attitude towards the Africa-modernity relation is conditioned by whether we accept this timeline. If we do, some of the conundrums associated with the relation will begin to make sense. Africa's challenge to modernity, in part, requires African and non-African scholars of modernity

to explore in more depth the works of Africans who, under the tutelage of Christian missions had been inducted into modernity and had become apostles of the way of life it enjoined. Among them were Samuel Ajayi Crowther, the first African Anglican Bishop and a polymath, James Africanus Beale Horton, a surgeon, scientist, soldier and philosopher, and Samuel Richard Brew Ahoh-Ahuma, a journalist, writer and politician. They were frustrated in their efforts once colonialism was imposed and, unfortunately, our current understanding of the relations between Africa and modernity has been framed by this colonial inflection (Olufemi, 2018). The latter cohort of administrators and missionaries, and from the third quarters of the 19th century onwards, denied the humanity of Africans and deemed their societies backward. Gradually, modernity in the African imaginary became one with that in the name of which Africans were imperialized and brutalized. Racism-dominated colonial education ultimately extirpated the memory of the earlier African converts to modernity. Many of us Africans are afraid of autonomy, the very core of individualism and human existence. It is a double-edged sword. When one messes things up, one must take responsibility for one's actions. Are Africans so ready? I always marvel at the ability of African leaders to bask in the role of the appointed beggars to the world. They never dream big dreams. They take no big risks. They are always satisfied with /the handouts from their erstwhile imperial rulers, forever begging for increases in their picket money, welfare amounts, call it what you will. Either they have forgotten or, worse still, they never learned how to be subjects and cannot be bothered to acquire the sense of being one. In lieu of the autonomy and the risks that it entails, we have persistently embraced the aid model fashioned by colonialism, which denied our basic humanity. It puts us on aid, atrophying our subjectivity and weakening us enough that we hardly ever think of solving our problems ourselves without reference to Europe, America and, now, Asia. Our will is bent by our donors; we require their approval for the minutest changes in direction of running the affairs of our so-called sovereign countries. It is a mark of how inured to aid the continent has become that we do not see Africans, especially their intellectuals, thundering against the indignity that comes with our being the appointed mendicants to an increasingly affluent world. Africa's leaders dutifully troop out to wherever anyone promises us alms. The purpose of this paper is to re-conscientizing the Africans on the challenges of modernism. The paper further examines African conceptions of modernity and how this understanding severely hampered its development and the impact it has on power and economy, science, technology, communication, religion and moral decadence. Due to the impacts of colonialism, neo-colonialism and globalization, modernization is conceived by Africans as synonymous with westernization or Europeanization. This in turn, led African countries to lose their identity and indigenous cultural values. Consequently, as the reconstruction and development programs (policy and strategy formulations in various aspects) did not take these indigenous values as their anchoring point, many

African countries could not reach the level of development where they can feed their people, keep their health and facilitate the development of infrastructure.

## **2. The Concept of Modernity**

The word "modern" according to Baudelarie (Baudelaire, 2010, 101 stems etymologically from the Latin word "modernus" meaning the "just now." In common usage, "modernity" refers to social, cultural, and intellectual condition that helps to fix the distinct with western society. The concept of modernism, being fluid, defies any definite definition. Hence Paul Wood, quoted by Hassan (2010, 454), suggests that we "look at some of the ways in which the concept has been used and try to draw out some of the central preoccupations of the modernists" in our attempt to explicate what modernity is all about. The notion of modernity is most frequently used as an expression of the condition of the world, often as a replacement for capitalism, industrialization, rationalization, secularization, the media and communication society, or other ideological or institutional traits that are believed to be characteristic for the West in contrast with preceding epochs or more primeval existing civilizations. According to Hassan (2010, 454), "modernity... engages those social changes implied in becoming modern - urbanization, industrialization, wage labor and factory systems, and so on..." According to Ali A. Mazrui (2006, 19), modernity consists in the following:

1. A quest for practical effectiveness compatible with social equity.
2. A quest for technical proficiency - a shifting balance in technique from custom and intuition to innovation and measurement.
3. A quest for secular knowledge - a shifting balance in the science of explanation from the super manual to the temporal.
4. Planning for the future: A shifting balance between preoccupation with ancestry and tradition to a concern for anticipation and planning.

Kebede (2004, 3) argues that modernity is related to the idea of "progress" therefore, should be conceived as "forward movement into the past." As modernity is closely related to the concept of tradition; and tradition is the result of maturity of cultural values, understanding modernity is inconceivable without a comprehensive understanding of the nature and relation of tradition and culture with modernity. Gyekye, in his book, *Tradition and Modernity*, clearly explicated the notion of tradition. Neal (2007, 4-5) noted that tradition is created by people at some point in time. Thus, that particular generation is considered as the creator of some cultural values, and these values may or may not transcend across the next generations. At every stage across the generations, the people create some new cultural values in addition to what they have inherited from their ancestors. Those cultural values which manage to

survive and transcend at least for three generations would be assumed to reach maturity level of cultural values or cultural productions where they can be labelled as tradition.

However, this does not mean that any cultural practice or institution that has lasted a mere three decades (generations) would be regarded as a tradition. Thus Gyekye (1997, 263), in his horizontal line represented the fate of cultural values as they pass from one generation to the other. Although tradition and culture are closely related, they are not the same, for cultural values may or may not evolve to traditions. Cultural values in one generation, as Gyekye (1997, 263) expounded, are beliefs or practices that are created "based on some historical circumstances, certain conception of human society, social relations, certain metaphysical ideas, and other kind of ideas, beliefs, or presuppositions." The question of modernity is the question of culture; and cultural values evolve to the level of tradition through time across history. Thus, understanding modernity is inconceivable without historical interpretation of the concept of modernity and modern culture. This method of understanding, in Lucius Outlaw's terms is called "hermeneutical understanding" (1987, 27) Outlaw asserts that, " hermeneutical understanding is experiential encounter with a heritage, a tradition, which speaks through a life praxis, forms of expression, a literary text, oral as well as written" (p. 27).

In support, Eze suggested that "Historic-Hermeneutical" interpretation of our past should be a vital task of African intellectuals in bringing about progress. Thus, historic-hermeneutical interpretation is an essential part of the project towards the understanding of modernity; for conceptions may vary with differing of perspectives. Gyekye (1997, 263), for instance, argues that although modernity has originated in the West and articulated by Western scholars, it does not necessarily refer to a particular point in time; or does it mean the same thing for the people who invented the concept and who adapted or adopted it. Modernity is not peculiar to the Europeans. Hassan (2010, 454) contends that there is "the plurality of modernity, even in its European context, and the realization that there are other modernisms beyond the European context. Straden explained that hermeneutical understanding consists of historical and political interpretation of the phenomenon. "The interpretation of modernity has therefore both historical and political dimensions.

It is historical in that, the concept emerged out in particular setting, and developed across time. It is political in the sense that a particular culture may be used to further political enterprise to achieve certain political effects" (Straden, 2011, 15-6). The historical dimension of modernity would tell us how the modernization process started in the West, how the culture of modernity developed and transmitted to Africa. By doing so, we can understand the promises and challenges of modernity in our post-

colonial situations. The fact that we find the word "modern" as a prefix to almost every discipline such as: modern history, modern art, modern philosophy, modern religion, modern technology, implies that modernity also refers to a particular period in history. The "modern" situation of Africa became paradoxical as a result of the legacy of colonization and the ever increasing phenomena of neo-colonialism and globalization.

The more Africans strive to acquire modernity and civilization, the more they lose their identity and indigenous values. This is because contemporary African is haunted by the spirit of confusion and dilemma. This complexity arises mainly from the non-evolutionary radical imposition of alien cultural values by the West through the modernization process. As Subairi (2010, 265-6) pointed out, "change and crises illustrate the problematic nature of epistemological continuum and call for serious negotiation in the exchange of philosophical ideas between the traditional and the modern minds."

### **3. Westernization**

Westernization is the adoption of values and practices that are peculiar or associated with the Westerner. It is "the adoption of the practices and culture of Western Europe by societies and countries in other parts of the world, whether through compulsion or influence." The widespread of westernization is as a result of colonialism whereby the colonized country is made to adopt the cultural values of the colonizer and in some cases their technology. Westernization started with the European traders and missionaries who thought that the European ways of trade and belief system are superior to other civilizations hence they were persuaded or deceived to accept them. The surge in westernization has made some conflate westernization with modernization. In different civilizations, it has become increasingly difficult to modernize without getting westernized.

### **4. Africa**

The term Africa is a complex and an elusive concept with varying meaning amongst scholar. Hassan (2010, 453) citing Mudimbe sees the African as "partly an invention and partly an affirmation of certain natural features, cultural characteristics, and values that contribute to Africa as a continent and its civilization as constituting a set of difference from those, say, designated by Asia and Europe." Following the advent of colonialism and slave trade, it has become difficult to speak of the African as one within "a mere geographic entity or delimited locale" (Hassan, 2010, 253). Africans may as well refer to "anything from or pertaining to the continent of Africa: People who are native to Africa, descendants of natives of Africa, or individuals who trace their ancestry to indigenous inhabitants of Africa."

## **5. African Misconception of Modernization**

The African contact with the Europeans and its legacies leaves scholars and researchers with mixed feelings and unanswered questions. Whether the colonizers have been able to either modernize or westernize Africa is still very much debatable. The African experience of colonialism leaves the African in the "illusion that modernization is westernization" (Nwinya, 2019, 60). The African conflation of modernization and westernization are not accidental but a deliberate attempt by the imperialists to obliterate or distort African value, culture and civilization which they considered primitive. According to Omeje and Kwaja (2015, 83), "part of the necessity for maximizing the colonial agenda was the tendency towards a systematic obliteration of the entire African social structure and the imposition of their western equivalent or alternative where such existed."

It is this calculated effort coupled with their application of force where deemed necessary that made it appear as if the Africans lacked the capacity or the "audacity to reject the Western and accept the modern" (Nwinya, (2019, 60). Such ordeal was also prevalent in other non-European nations that suffered under colonialism. Japan, for instance, resisted external influence but was coerced into accepting the Western value. Chinese, like Africans, during a stage of their civilization confused the idea of modernization with westernization. In an attempt to catch up with lost time in modernity, the Chinese, neglecting her rich cultural values embraced Western values, believing them to be superior to Chinese values. As Marie Anthony (2011) puts it, "they made the mistake of believing that western culture and standard were superior to theirs. They confused modernization with westernization." Similarly, India was made to adopt the western institution that failed to appreciate the uniqueness of the India's pluralism.

However, the African experience that influenced her conflation of modernization and westernization is particularly different from other non-European nations. The racist approach in the colonization of Africa made it a necessity that Africa sheds off all of its values and cultural heritage if it must be modernized. According to Nwinya (2019, 60), "the imperialistic occupation of Africa left the continent more westernized and less modernized than any other civilization." The deliberate efforts at distorting and obliterating institutions, values cultural heritage and identity finds expression in the contemporary African society in their inordinate quest to replace whatever is African with the Western counterparts. The 'modernized African' distinguishes elite from a 'primitive' by mere accent and ability to fluently speak the imperialists' language. One is looked down upon for speaking English with one's native accent. The African misconceives modernization to mean being acquainted to Western behaviour pattern and mode of doing things - eating, dressing, and other aspects of life that casts aspersions on the African heritage. The African conception of modernization is the

abysmal abandonment of African communal lifestyle, language, familyhood, religion and total disregard for traditional institutions. The impact of colonization and the African understanding of modernization have created for the African the problem of cultural dualism and double identity.

The 'modernized African' is lost in-between being a Westerner and staying true to his African heritage. Such has also been the root of inferiority complex. The African has failed to modernize without westernizing. According to Nwinya (2019, 94), "the implication of this is that modernity, which essentially reflects the transition from the pre-modern (e.g. feudal and semi feudal) to modern (e.g. industrial and secular) way to life and knowledge system is translated to mean westernization in thinking and practice." We therefore ask: can Africa modernize without westernizing? The impact of the misconception of modernism finds expression, negatively, on our political institutions, economy, familyhood, religion, moral values and land tenure system. The African and her traditional values are considered inferior to her Western counterparts.

## **6. Challenges Associated with Misconceiving Modernization**

Africa has continued to suffer from the effects of her contact with the European colonizers. The impacts of this experience permeates every aspect of the life of the African, politics, economy, religion, family life as well as moral values. Scholars have argued and counter-argued whether such experience positively or negatively impacted the Africans. In respect to the African conception and practice of what he understands as modernity, one can categorically say that such experience is ruinous to what it means to be African. As some scholars argue, the colonizers left Africans more westernized than modernized. It is therefore imperative to examine ways that the misconception of modernization has adversely affected African traditional values and institutions.

### **6.1 Politics and Economy**

The advent of the colonizers saw to a magnificent obliteration and negligence of existing African traditional political institutions. The indigenous political institutions "were variously mutilated, defaced and distorted by western colonizers" (Omeje and Kwaja, (2015, 85). In the traditional African society, power is significantly decentralized. Everyone shares from the political power of the society. As Sibani (2018, 66) expresses, "consequent on African ontology, authority and power belongs to the entire community just like the vital force. Every member has a share of the power."<sup>31</sup> Most often such power is conferred on individuals considered to be worthy of having custody of such power and exercising such on behalf of the community. In other words, power, in the pre-colonial Africa, is dominantly vested in a man whose integrity has been tested and trusted over time. On the contrary, the western-oriented political system that followed colonialism has ignominiously displaced this and replaced it with a

system that encourages power tussle with leads to fight, killing and maiming of political opponents in the inordinate quest for power. As Sibani (2018, 66) contends, "High values and respect should be reposed in African leaders and there is need to re-evaluate the traditional leadership systems which are more hereditary in nature."

Notwithstanding the resistance met, the colonizers in their rather deceitful attempt to modernize Africa enthroned a system that usurped the power of traditional rulers and apparently made them weaklings before their subjects and sometimes, an unwilling tool of political emancipation of the agenda of any ruling government. In order to maintain the centralized political structures instituted by the imperialists, "the colonial government established Western-oriented institutions and agencies of governance that usurped the sovereignty of traditional institutions and subordinated to the control of colonial government" (Omeje and Kwaja, (2015, 86). The imprints of the colonizer's use of force continues to influence the post-colonial African leaders who have continued to subjugate the traditional leaders and in cases of any resistance, tow the path of the colonizers in dethroning such traditional leader. Behaviours and body language considered to be confrontational or partisan is often met with deliberate persecution or outright removal from office. The cases of the legendary Ghanaian Asantehene Otumfuo Agyeman Prempeh I, Chaka of Zulu and king Jaja of Opobo suffice for instances. In recent times, it has been the same as it is reported that Chief Willie Obiano, the Executive Governor of Anambra State suspended 12 traditional rulers for travelling out of the state without government approval (Premium Times, 2020) and finally sacked three of the suspended monarch (Onu).

The uniqueness of the diversified Africa was grossly downplayed by the colonizers' partitioning of Africa. The colonial factor was essential to the understanding of the process of westernization that created modern society in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. The holistic distortion of the hitherto well organized African societies in every sphere of life pointed to the depth and effectiveness of colonization in the process of westernizing African societies and their culture. Mimiko noted the distortions of natural boundaries without due recourse to antecedent institutions and cultures. He avers that "the western civilization submerged and dismantled indigenous institutions and, in its place, a foreign rule was established. Traditional institutions before then were regarded as not only political authorities but also custodians of culture in Africa with particular reference to Nigeria" (Mimiko, 2010, 112-3). He further insisted that the introduction of liberal democracy does not just work in Africa (Mimiko, 2010). It is not that Africa did not have its own pattern of democracy before the imposition of liberal democracy but the typical democracy in Africa and its process were submerged by westernization and modernization and made possible by globalization. The impact of the modernization process in Africa has two layers: physical and mental destruction.

This was indeed a consciously planned activity of the colonial powers. As Bell (2007, 205) remarked "Europe ruled Africa for over one-and-a-half centuries; it bureaucratized and exploited natural and human resources; and even while consciously excluding its partnership in Western economic development." Apart from the international trade, central and equatorial Africa has been exploited in three different but interrelated ways.

First, concessionary system in which the colonial rulers delegate private concessionary companies in the name of developing the wealth of African countries resulted in high degree of natural resources destruction. When concessionary system was replaced by the colonial system, the environmental crises and losses of indigenous values even worsened than ever before. A major effect of European colonialism was the progressive integration of Africa into the world capitalist system, within which Africa functioned primarily as a source of raw materials for Western industrial production. There was imposition of taxation, which forced Africans into wage labour. Subsistent farming which kept varieties of indigenous crop species replaced by cash cropping, diamond and gold mining, resulting in displacement of people and animals were expanded. There was a sudden shift in production mode; from production of food crops to cash crops, a situation that caused hunger and starvation in Africa. As Africans began to produce more of what she needs less and less of what she needs most, Africa became a beggar. Such has been the case of African leaders and Africans at large as we have continued to ask for economic assistance from the exploits of our colonizers.

In addition, the change in production mode poses some sociological implications. As Ritzer (2015) emphasizes, although economic and political issues are of great importance, it is the cultural issues and cultural theories that attract the most attention of sociology." The change in the mode of production creates conflict in most of labour-oriented African society including Nigeria. In these indigenous societies, the introduction of heavy technology for mass production increased unemployment. This increase in unemployment has many social crises which are the basis for social conflicts. Africa was perpetually turned to producer of primary raw materials, a situation that caused unequal exchange. The plunderage method and systematically kleptocratic enterprises established in the colonies to expropriate natural resources of Africa to Europe has, in the perspective of Mimiko (2010), facilitated underdevelopment of Africa while it engendered the development of Europe. This requires a total reorganization of African economic life beginning with the introduction of the cash crop and inexorable alteration of economic pattern. In the settler colonies notably in Kenya and Rhodesia, Mimiko revealed that the alienation of native land complicated the economic situation of the indigenous population. It also altered the way we produce, create and recreate as well as what we consume.

The infrastructure undertaken by the colonial administration was minimal; development was strictly as a function of the requirements of the new economy, which saw to the rise of the colonial cities such as Dakar, Lagos, Nairobi, and Luanda. The introduction of neo-liberalism brought about an economic process that distrusts the state as a factor in development; it is in a nineteenth century philosophy that has been repackaged, its latest form is monetarism. It believes that market mechanism is the most efficient allocator of productive resources, therefore, to have an efficient and effective economy, forces of demand and supply must be allowed to play a leading role. This changed the economy of Africa to capitalism and, later, to neo-liberalism (Mimiko, 2010).

In the process of modernizing Africa, the colonizers altered the traditional land tenure system of various communities. Land remains a major means of economic production for most Africans. With colonialism, a new requirement of land tilting and registration as the basis for establishing private ownership of land was introduced (Omeje and Kwaja, 2015, 87). "This legal requirement was problematic because private ownership of land was non-existent in many local communities... This action no doubt created population pressure and land scarcity for the local African populations that were confined to highly marginal and less productive land spaces" (Omeje and Kwaja, 2015, 87).

## **6.2 Science and Technology**

Although no major effort of industrialization was put to place during the colonial era, and there has been no significant development since, western technology has long entered the lives of Africa through familiarity with manufactured products imported from the West. The cultural alteration provoked by the pressure of colonial rule and missionary in all spheres of life are pervasive enough to qualify as signs of a new cultural coup in Africa. However, as Sibani noted, "Western technology has tremendously improved the lifestyle of Africans in various areas such as Medicine, Communication, Transport, Agriculture, Sports, Education, Clothing, and so on" (Sibani, 2018, 69). Nevertheless, this does not come without an attendant costly price. The use and development of traditional medicine is consequently relegated to the background while the abuse of harmful drugs has taken precedent. The use of drugs for certain ends such as abortion is a negation of the value which Africa treasures. Life is the ultimate value, however, some use and applications of modern science and technology makes one doubt whether it has succeeded in saving or destroying more lives. Modern medicine has largely taken precedence over traditional methods in matters of health. The use of arms and long range missiles constitute the legacies left behind by the imperialists.

### **6.3 Familyhood and Moral Decadence**

Westernization conflated as modernization has continued to eat at the values and virtues promoted and upheld in a traditional African society. Africans in their disillusioned understanding of modernity have abandoned their traditional marriage rituals and practices. An average African in this contemporary time sees marriage in the lens of the Westerners. Polygamous and extended family that knitted people together is jettisoned in preference of its Western counterpart, individualistic, nuclear family. The traditional indigenous African knows nothing like cousin; my mother's siblings' children are my brothers and sisters, my father's brother is my father. Today, single parenting has been institutionalized. The westernization bequeathed to Africans in place of modernization is purely individualistic, neglecting and destroying the communalism characteristic of an African society.

This also has enhanced urbanization and mass exodus of people from rural areas to urban areas. The population pressure created by this is responsible for the social ills and challenges associated with urban area. There is a significant disorientation of the African on what it is to live a virtuous life and observing the values of the societies. In Igbo parlance, it is said that "ezi afa ka ego" - meaning "a good name is better than riches." What ordinarily was expressly condemnable has gradually become a norm in Africa. Western civilization has promoted corruption in Africa; African leaders now look up to Europe and America as a safe haven for looted funds. The African conception of sexuality has drastically changed completely; the quest to be westernized by African youths has lured them into promiscuous and unimaginable behaviours. Nonetheless, this does not in any way support cultural isolationism. Cultural isolationism is not possible in the context of globalization. Cultural ideas and values grow and flow across borders unimpeded, but that should not make us lose sight of the fact that the weaker you are, the more likelihood of cultural dominance. Africa has been very weak and vulnerable since the last century. Africa now suffers from level of mental enslavement, cultural imperialism, the need for decolonization of the mind.

### **6.4 Communication**

The trend of Western civilization and modernization in Africa is pathetic most especially, the strength of wave of Western civilization is such that Africa in general and Nigeria in particular is hardly capable of resisting it. The wave is so strong that it has become irresistible.

Omeje and Kwaja (2015, 84) clearly stated that:

With the coming of colonial rule into Africa, the languages of imperialism - English, French, Portuguese and Spanish - were imposed on different parts of the continent, as part of the cultural tools for colonization. Consequently, the imposed imperial languages were intended to progressively displace the

indigenous languages on the pretext that the latter were too 'primitive' to serve as the medium of communication and the production of scientific knowledge. In fact, attempts by colonialism to foist cultures that were alien to African civilization, value systems and traditions became a weapon of divisiveness that separated much of the African people from the reality of their histories, norms, traditions and religion

Proficiency in our language is declining in Africa because we are compelled to embrace Western culture and civilization as made possible by globalization. Proficiency in Western language has created a dichotomy between an 'elite' and mass of our people who still cannot do business with foreign language. It causes alienation for people who cannot speak English. Language is a vehicle of culture; we are in a very serious problem. Professor Babafunwa's project on local language as a basic tool of teaching in Nigeria was aborted because of the nature of our country.

### **6.5 Religion**

According to Omeje and Kwaja (2015, 84), "the civilization of Africa has largely been shaped by a triangular formation of religious worldviews that are both competitive, contradictory and in some instances complementary..." The continued existence of these alien religions, Christianity and Islam has created and sustained varying degrees of cultural conflicts within the continent. The incursion of Christianity has to be considered, for this has been the most important single factor in the process of modernization in Africa. Western education involving literacy and mastery of a European language became the condition for entry into the modern sector. For most of the colonial period, education was in the hands of Christian missionary who sought not only to convert Africans but also to inculcate Western values. Christianity and Islam challenged traditional belief systems and promoted the diffusion of new ideas and modes of life; in particular, it sought to impose monogamy and the nuclear family as the norm. Ironically, the drastic reduction of infant mortality has made possible and also complicated the demographic issues in Africa, with consequences for agricultural manpower and social services.

### **7. Redefining Modernity: The Examples of Asia**

After more than half a century since the end of colonialism, it has become untenable to heap the blames of Africa's backwardness on the colonizers. Despite Africa's enormous wealth of both human and mineral resources, Africa has continued to effeminately shift the buck of her underdevelopment on the imperialists. This is largely because the African still suffers mental colonization. The African still finds it difficult to separate modernity from westernization. The African has abysmally failed to see the beauty and uniqueness of African tradition, culture and values hence the African shamefully and

with open arms continue to embrace westernization. The African still sees himself less human and inferior to the white imperialists. In order to help the African see modernization from the right perspective, we turn to other civilizations that have, to a large extent, 'de westernized' after been colonized; and thereby see if Africa can modernize without westernizing. Although the Westerners left their hosts more westernized than modernized, there are civilizations that have made conscientious effort and formulated home-made philosophy that helped them to modernize using Western technology while they maintain their indigenous culture and values. Such countries as China, Japan and India suffice as good examples. It is evident in all nations colonized by the Europeans that what was bequeathed to them as modernization is what Mazrui (2006, 17) termed "soft-westernization" which has to do with Western values such as language and religion instead of "hard-westernization" which deals with science and technology, numeracy etc. Soft-westernization is intended to Europeanize the colonized while on the other hand, hard-westernization impact the host technologically. Such was the Japanese case until after the Meiji restoration.

According to Mazrui (2006, 16), "the Japanese after the Meiji Restoration of 1868 purposefully pursued economic modernization without cultural westernization." The Japanese without forbidding their cultural heritage stands proudly as one of the developed countries of the world despite the impact of colonization. The Japanese decisively did a retrospect, asking themselves the fundamental question: "can we economically modernize without culturally westernizing?" (Mazrui, 2006, 15). They affirmed they can modernize economically without culturally westernizing. And that is what they did. According to Mazrui (2006, 15), "The Japanese succeeded in spectacular modernization without succumbing too much to cultural westernization."

Also, at a point in Chinese civilization, they embraced westernization in an attempt to catch up with lost time. They confused modernization with westernization. While the Chinese derailed due to her conflation of modernization and westernization, they embarked on the project of self-realization through which they found their feet understanding how vulnerable their cultural heritage has become as a result of their westernizing. Nigeria, at the time of her independence, was at approximately the same per capital income with China, however, while China advanced technologically, Nigeria continued to westernize and effeminate. Mazrui (2006, 17) pointed out also that "when Ghana attained independence in 1957, it's per capital income was reportedly at the same level as that of South Korea. Since then, South Korea evolved into the 12th largest industrial power in the world, while Ghana stagnated. And yet Ghanaians spoke better English and were Christianized in larger numbers than South Korea." In addition, India jettisoned westernization that undermined their unique pluralism. During the colonization of India, the Europeans tried to impose an internalized nationalism which

was alien to India because of their pluralistic cultural heritage. However, India upon independence repudiated such artificial imperialistic culture and formulated philosophy and policies that appreciated their diverse nationalism and culture while they engendered the rehabilitation of their traditional medicine and culture.

Apparently, India has left the seat of the poverty capital of the world for Nigeria despite Nigeria's wealth of resources. Modernization differs significantly from westernization. The "just now" condition of Africa does not represent anything modernity but one absorbed in Deep Ocean of cultural shock. Modernization in Africa should be understood as a purposeful course of action which is intended to help Africans achieve a holistic development. It is time for Africa leaders to formulate a blueprint for rejuvenating Africa economically. Despite the fact that Africa cannot possibly modernize without westernizing, Africa can actually adopt Western technologies while they retain their African spirit, tradition, culture and values. Like the Japanese, the African can adopt the slogan: "Western technique, African spirit." While modernization is an imperative for a country to compete in the global world, westernization is to some degree a choice, whether conscious or unconscious" (Florig, quoted by Nwinya, 2019, 61). Africa should understand the difference between modernity and westernization from the standpoint of Florig. Florig, quoted by Nwinya (2019, 62), expounds that:

The minimal requirements of modernization are industrialization, urbanization, complex and diverse occupational structures; economic enterprises based on rationality and efficiency; technically rational modes of thought; mass education, mass communication, a centralized nation, state and institutions that participate in global systems while Western values and institutions include: individualism, liberty, equality, constitutionalism, human rights, free markets, secularization and democracy.

## **8. Conclusion**

Modernity is a vital element in the journey of human progress or development. Since development is the sum total of all aspects of human progress aims at improving the human conditions, and modernity has the same end, it is obligatory to conceive modernity appropriately. Just as some aspects of modern Western values speed up our economic development, there are some that weigh down the social and emotional wellbeing of African people. Thus, critical investigation and modification of both the western and the African values should be highly demanded so as to meet genuine modernity. The trend of cultural westernization of Africa has become very pervasive and prevalent, such that Western civilization has taken precedence over African values and culture and the latter is regarded as inferior to the former. As with other societies

and cultures in the so-called Third World, the impact of Western civilization on Africa has occasioned a discontinuity in forms of life throughout the continent. This has led to cultural dualism and double identity that often presents itself as a dilemma in concrete, real life situations. In other words, the African experience of modernity is fraught with tensions at every level of the communal and social settings. The post-independence Africa is confronted with how to have a true identity, a new culture that is African in nature. It is on this basis that the paper maintains that Africa must begin to relate with countries that have "de-westernized" and have attained some level of appreciable economic development. The focus is to evolve viable options for a truly African culture.

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