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Coloniality of Being and the Phenomenon of Violence

Is there not something suspicious, indeed symptomatic, about this focus on subjective violence—that violence which is enacted by social agents, evil individuals, disciplined repressive apparatuses, fanatical crowds? Doesn't it desperately try to distract our attention from true locus of trouble, by obliterating from view other forms of violence and thus actively participating in them?

Slavoj Žižek (2009: 9).

Introduction

In the preface to *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony* (2006), Jean and John Comaroff addressed the paradox of the ubiquity of violence in the postcolonies in general. Their entry point to the debate on violence was predicated on whether postcolonies were 'haunted more by unregulated violence, un/civil warfare, and random terror than are other twenty-first-century nation-states?' Their response was that, 'Yes, postcolonies are especially, excessively, distinctively violent and disorderly. Yes, they are sinking ever further into a mire of conflict, coercion and chaos. Yes, this does seem to be a chronic, not temporary, state of being' (Comaroffs 2006: vii). The Comaroffs' explanation for this state of being is that the postcolonies were located within a world order dominated by new modes of governance, new sorts of empires and new species of wealth where poverty and race were criminalized (Comaroffs 2006: 1-42). This is indeed part of the answer; but there is need for further interrogation of the roots of violence which has cost many lives, disrupted social life, retarded economic development, and fragmented nation-states in postcolonial Africa.

This chapter discusses the all-pervading atmosphere of violence in Africa which has seriously affected African people's lives across precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial historical epochs. While violence has manifested itself in everyday African life in the form of wars of conquest, inter and intra-community raiding, terrorism, criminality, rape, torture, maiming, and killing, to mention a few, its logic remains hard to understand beyond naming and condemning. Precolonial violence involved people of the same colour who were not permanently demarcated by what Santos (2007: 45-89) termed Western 'abyssal thinking' that underpinned colonial violence that was premised on 'impossibility of the copresence' between white colonizers and black colonized peoples. During the pre-colonial era, African socio-political formations and ecologies of knowledge did not develop along what Maldonado-Torres (2007: 240-270) termed the 'racist/imperial Manichean misanthropic skepticism' whose essence was not only to doubt the very humanity of non-Western people but also to project them as 'racialized and sexualized subjects' open to all sorts of violence including enslaving, rape and genocide.

Precolonial African socio-political formations had room for full incorporation and successful assimilation of defeated communities into the host society. But under colonial modernity that was shot through with a racial order of identities, whites could not be accommodated into the African societies they despised and sought to transform and black people could not be accommodated into colonial white society that was fenced in by racism. The socio-political formation that was created by colonial modernity took the form of what Mamdani (2006) termed a bifurcated colonial state formation of citizens and subjects. In this set-up of intersubjective relations, the colonizers used violence to keep the colonized in a subordinated position, forcing them endure all forms of exploitation and abuses.

This chapter examines the concept of the coloniality of being as advanced by Maldonado Torres, in combination with Fanon's notion of the *damnes*, and Slavoj Žižek's ideas of subjective, objective and symbolic violence, as important conceptual tools to explore the logic of violence in African history from the time of colonial encounters to the present. The chapter locates the logic of violence in coloniality and its reproduction of African subjectivities where race was used not only to 'condemn' black people into *damnes* but to also deny their very humanity so as to justify such forms of violence as slavery, colonial conquest, dispossession, imprisonment, rape, shooting and killing. African nationalism as a deeply interpellated phenomenon reproduced

colonial violence and authoritarianism, bequeathing it on postcolonial Africa as a mode of governance. While the key concern of this chapter is to explain the logic of violence, its central arguments are empirically proven through the case studies of the Herero people who became victims of German colonial genocide; Congo under King Leopold II where violence was the mode of governance; and South Africa where neo-apartheid situation recreated black townships and informal settlements as crouching villages of violence, civil tension and social strife.

Zizek (2009) has categorized violence into three forms. first he noted he common intellectual concentration on interrogation of visible 'subjective' violence perpetrated by identifiable agents with its obvious signals such as criminality, terror, civil unrest, war and international conflict. This, according to him, 'is just the most visible portion of a triumvirate that also includes two objective kinds of violence'; and for this violence to be understood, there is need 'to perceive the contours of the background which generates such outburst' (Zizek 2009: 1). Behind subjective violence there is an 'objective' kind of violence which falls into two forms. The first is 'symbolic' violence embodied in language and its speech forms. Its locale is the relation of domination and is reproduced in human speech forms. The second is 'systemic' violence located within economic and political systems and exists like the dark matter of physics but is the motive force of 'what otherwise seem to be "irrational" explosions of subjective violence' (Zizek 2009: 2).

Besides contributing to the categorization of violence, Zizek also suggested 'six sideways glances' as the ideal approach for studying violence rather than a direct glance. The six sideways glances help in transcending 'the overpowering horror of violent acts and empathy with the victims' which 'inexorably function as a lure which prevents us from thinking' (Zizek 2009: 3). He elaborated further that 'a dispassionate conceptual development of the typology of violence must by definition ignore its traumatic impact' (Zizek 2009: 3). The challenge facing researchers trying to understand the logic of violence is the possibility of maintaining a 'cold critical analysis' that is not disturbed by the horrors and moral outrage. Ideally, researchers of violence are constantly advised to maintain a 'distance' from the moralities of violence. This is not easy to maintain in the face of horrors of violence but still the subject of violence is so important that it cannot be abandoned as a field of study because of the emotions it provokes.

However, the key concern of this chapter is about the logic of violence that is pervasive in Africa rather than on methodologies of studying violence.

The psychoanalytical and philosophical work of Frantz Fanon and Nelson Maldonado-Torres who articulated the concept of coloniality of being is useful in understanding the logic of violence within colonized and ex-colonized zones of Africa. Fanon and Maldonado-Torres situated the logic of violence within coloniality. This chapter therefore proceeds by way of defining the concepts of coloniality and coloniality since they are central to understanding of violence in Africa.

Coloniality and the creation of a racialized/ethnicized adversarial world

Coloniality is an analytical concept developed by radical Latin American scholars such as Quijano, Mignolo, Escobar, Grosfoguel and others whose main concern was to develop a new understanding of modernity from the perspective of colonial difference and the side of the ex-colonized people who experienced its dark side (Escobar 2007: 179-210). Coloniality is rooted in colonialism but is different from colonialism. Colonialism is an encapsulation of political and economic relations in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation which then proceeds to set up direct colonial administration over these people.

Coloniality, on the other hand, is a reference to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism and continues to define culture, labour, intersubjective relations and knowledge production, well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. As defined by the Quijano, coloniality is one of the specific and constitutive elements of global model of capitalist power that is based on a racial/ethnic classification of the global population as the cornerstone of that model of power. It is rooted in Western modernity and colonial encounters. Today, coloniality operates on every level, in every arena and dimension of everyday human social existence (Quijano 2000: 342).

Coloniality lies at the centre of the modern/colonial world of yesterday and today where Europe and America are at the apex of global power hierarchy and Africa is at the bottom. It unfolded in terms of what became known as 'the voyages of discovery' that culminated in colonial encounters between Europe and Africa and invoked the ideas of mapping of the world. Western modernity is the source and motive force of expansion of European particularism into universalism. Imperialism and colonialism became the main vehicles in this expansion of European influence that were underpinned by violence through and through.

At the social level, coloniality was underpinned by 'a conception of humanity according to which the global population was differentiated

into inferior and superior, irrational and rational, primitive and civilized, traditional and modern' (Quijano 2000: 343). Coloniality was and is shot through by Eurocentrism as a power matrix that encompassed the consistent drive to control labour and its product; nature and its productive resources; gender, its products and the reproduction of the human species; subjectivity, its material and intersubjective products as well as knowledge; and authority and its instruments of coercion, persuasion and violence which was to ensure the reproduction of the Euro-American-centric dominant power relations over Africa and the rest of the world (Quijano 2000: 344).

Coloniality is rooted in a particular socio-historical setting that included the discursive formation of racialized subjectivities that were linked to specific cartographic social formations known as continents. As Maldonado-Torres (2007: 243) argues, coloniality has survived colonialism and is kept alive in old and current books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the image of peoples and in aspirations and perceptions of self. Human beings, as modern subjects, live and breathe coloniality all the time and every day.

At the centre of coloniality was and is race which formed the foundation of the codification and institutionalization of differences between conquerors (white races) and the conquered (black races). The conquerors assumed a superiority complex and assigned inferiority to the conquered and colonized peoples. This process happened in tandem with the institution and constitution of a new colonial structure of labour control and its resources that authorized the exploitative relations of slavery, serfdom, forced labour and other forms that were mediated by violence.

Santos (2007: 45) described Western thinking that underpinned colonial modernity as 'an abyssal thinking' consisting of 'visible and invisible distinctions, the invisible ones being the foundation of the visible ones'. He said further that Western 'abyssal thinking' was at the root of the making of the colonial zones as the 'other side of the line' radically different from the metropolitan zones as 'this side of the line'. The colonial zones which included most of what today is described as ex-colonized parts of the world (Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa) were constructed and represented as a realm of incomprehensible way of being. According to him::

What most fundamentally characterizes abyssal thinking is thus the impossibility of the copresence of the two sides of the line. To the extent that it prevails, this side of the line only prevails by exhausting the field of relevant reality, beyond it, there is only nonexistence, invisibility, nondialectical absence (Santos 2007: 45-46).

The metropolitan zones were represented as progressing through 'social regulation and social emancipation' whereas the colonial zones were caught up within the web of 'appropriation/violence' (Santos 2007: 46). Lawlessness and violence ruled the colonial zones as confirmed by Fanon who experienced colonialism in his native country of Martinique and in Algeria which that became his second home. He said:

The colonial world is a world cut into two. The dividing line, the frontiers are shown by barracks and police stations. In the colonies it is the policemen and the soldiers who are the official, instituted go-betweens, the spokesmen of the settler and his rule of oppression. [...] In the colonial countries, on the contrary, the policemen and the soldier, by their immediate presence and their direct action maintain contact with the native and advise him by means of rifle-butts and napalm not to budge. It is obvious here that the agents of government speak the language of pure force. The intermediary does not lighten the oppression, nor seek to hide the domination; he shows them up and puts them into practice with the clear conscience of an upholder of the peace; yet he is the bringer of violence into the home and into the mind of the native (Fanon 1968a: 29).

While truce, peace, and friendship applied to social life in metropolitan societies; within the colonial zones the law of the strongest, violence and plunder reigned supreme. What assumptions, values, and ideas informed coloniality of radical divisions between the metropolitan and colonial zones? The creation of new identities of European, white, coloured, Indian, black, native, Negro and others was an important foundational component. Linking these new identities that emerged within coloniality was a type of social classification that was vertical rather than horizontal, depicting and reflecting superior-inferior assumptions that were developed as Western modernity expanded out of Europe into other parts of the world. The social hierarchy of new identities was not only informed by race but also by degrees of humanity attributed to the constructed identities. As Maldonado-Torres (2007: 244) puts it:

The 'lighter' one's skin is, the closer to full humanity one is, and vice versa. As the conquerors took on the role of mapping the world they kept reproducing this vision of things. The whole world was practically seen in the light of this logic. This is the beginning of 'global coloniality'.

Deployments of theories of scientific racism in the late nineteenth century were informed by well-established racial attitudes of the colonizers with regard to the degrees of humanity across the colonized-colonizer interactions. Philosophically, under coloniality, the principle of the Cartesian doubt codified

in the famous statement *cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am) underwent a quick metamorphosis to 'ergo conquiro'/'ergo conquistus' (I conquer, therefore, I am). The 'right of conquest' became an important legitimating value that authorized all sorts of violence deployed against the colonized.

The notion of colonized peoples as barbarians and savages was popularized as colonizers sought various means to justify their domination, exploitation, repression and other abuses of Africans. Maldonado-Torres (2007: 245) argues that the ideology of barbarity of the colonized was sustained by 'a radical questioning or permanent suspicion regarding the humanity of the self in question'. He termed this imperial attitude, the 'racist/imperial Manichean misanthropic skepticism' that sustained the superiority of the imperial white being (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 245). It was used to justify the inferiority of the black being under colonialism and is today hidden within structures of global coloniality where Westerners have remained at the top of racial hierarchies rooted in colonial modernity.

The racist/imperial Manichean misanthropic skepticism questioned the very humanity of colonized peoples as a deliberate strategy to justify all sorts of imperial and colonial interventions on the life and world of the colonized including enslaving them. What racist/imperial Manichean misanthropic skepticism authorized was the dangerous idea of colonial and racial subjects as usable and dispensable beings who had no souls. This further informed the popular imperial/colonial maxim that says, 'Beyond the equator there are no sins' (Santos 2007: 49-50). This meant that in dealing with non-Western/non-European/Black peoples located on the other side of the equator, ethics, law and other social sanctions that regulated life in Europe and other Western parts of the world had to be suspended for the law of nature including violence, became legitimate in encounters with those whose humanity was doubted.

At another level, the introduction of Western religion in Africa was also based on the imperial assumption that the black people had no religion. Such people were considered subhuman and unworthy of respect. The ideas of race, religion and empire reinforced one another. When adventurers like Christopher Columbus and colonizers emphasized that the people they encountered outside the Western world (Latin America, Caribbean, Asia, and Africa) had no religion, they were justifying a particular form of violence rooted in the notion of colonized people as empty beings lacking subjectivity and available for indoctrination with Christianity. To categorize the colonized people as subjects without religion was part of the strategy to excise them from the commonwealth of humanity (Maldonado-Torres n.d.).

In the Western cognitive map of the non-Western world and its people, such a people that did not have a religion did not deserve any form of respect and rights; hence brutal imperial wars were waged against Indians, Africans and such others. Genocide, scorched-earth policies, mutilation of bodies, and rape were legitimate part of the 'pacification of the barbarous tribes'. For instance, severed heads of African kings and chiefs were taken to Europe as trophies. Human beings like Sarah Baartman of the San-Khoi Khoi people of South Africa were captured and taken to Europe to be subjected to the most demeaning experiences of scientific experiments informed by racism. The predicament of the colonized was summed up by Maldonado-Torres in these words:

Misanthropic skepticism posits its targets as racialized and sexualized subjects. Once vanquished, they are said to be inherently servants and their bodies come to form part of an economy of sexual abuse, exploitation, and control. The ethics of the *ego conquiro* ceased to be only a special code of behaviour for periods of war and becomes [...] a standard of conduct that reflects the way things are—a way of things whose naturalization reaches its climax with the use of natural science to validate racism in the nineteenth century [...] Thus, the treatment of vanquished peoples in conditions of war is perceived as legitimate long after war is over (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 248).

Santos (2007: 51) amplified the debate further by arguing that violence manifested itself in various ways, including the realm of knowledge, where indigenous black guides were forcibly used to reveal African secrets and pathways on African rivers. Other mechanisms of violence used include direct pillaging of indigenous knowledge of biodiversity; prohibition of use of native languages in public spaces; forcible adoption of Christian names; and destruction of ceremonial sites. The violence also extended to slave trade and forced labour; instrumental use of customary law and authority under the indirect rule; pillage of natural resources, massive displacement of populations, and wars (Santos 2007: 51-52).

Coloniality of being and practises of violence

The concept of coloniality of being locates the roots of violence against Africans and other colonized people within the expansion of Western modernity. It qualifies Casparus Barleus' colonial dictum of 'beyond the equator there are no sins' by making the lives of colonized hellish. Coloniality of being captures the central question of the effects of coloniality on lived experiences of the colonized people that were mediated by the master-slave and colonizer-colonized dialectic where violence was naturalized and routinized as a key feature of colonial government.

The anarchic and traumatic moment of the constitution of the colonizer and the colonized subjectivities within the colonial encounters symbolized by the meeting of Europeans and Africans led to the birth of what Fanon termed 'existentialia' of the 'subject' of the coloniality of being. Fanon in his critique of Hegel's ideas on ontology, Frantz Fanon did not only contribute towards an alternative depiction of the master-slave dialectic but, as Maldonado-Torres (2007: 242) argues, he also advanced a rethinking of ontology in the light of coloniality and the search for decolonization in his acclaimed book *Black Skins, White Masks* (1968).

The concept of coloniality of being is important as it captures not only the depersonalization of black people under colonialism but the constitution of Africans as racialized subjects with next to no value placed on their lives. In the space of the colonized, death was 'no extra-ordinary affair' but 'a constitutive feature of the reality of colonized and racialized subjects' (Maldonado 2007: 251). At the centre of coloniality of being is 'blackness' as a defining feature of what Fanon (1968b: 110-119) referred to as the *damne* (the condemned of the earth). Coloniality of being is meant to capture the hell that descended on the colonized lives and became naturalized and routinized as the African mode of being. This hellish life is well described by Maldonado-Torres in this way:

Hellish existence in the colonial world carries with it both the racial and the gendered aspects of the naturalization of the non-ethics of war. *Indeed, coloniality of Being primarily refers to the normalization of the extraordinary events that take place in war.* While in war there is murder and rape, in the hell of the colonial world murder and rape become day to day occurrences and menaces. 'Killability' and 'rapeability' are inscribed into images of the colonial bodies. Lacking real authority, colonized men are permanently feminized. [...] Blackness in a colonial anti-black world is part of a larger context of meaning in which the non-ethics of war gradually becomes a constitutive part of an alleged normal world (emphasis is in the original source) (Maldonado-Torres 2007: 255).

One of the characteristics of the colonized person was is disappearance of their humanity under the shadow of dehumanization. Coloniality of being can be summarized as a state of human exception from the order of normal being as represented by the colonizer. It refers to 'the violation of the meaning of human alterity to the point where the alter-ego becomes a sub-alter' (Maldonado-Torres 2007:257). The daily life of the colonized 'approximated very closely with situations of war'. It is a humanity that is denied (Maldonado 2007: 257). Fanon described black subjectivity that emerged from the world of coloniality of being as *damne*, arguing that this subject has non-ontological

resistance in the eyes of the dominant group. The *damne* are said to co-exist with death as their whole lives are perpetually lived in 'the company of death' (Maldonado 2007: 257). It is a dark side of being characterized by neglect, denial of humanity and betrayals by other human beings.

Colonial modernity was accompanied by the proletarianization of Africans who were dispossessed and then forcibly pressed into serving as cheap labour for white-owned farms, industries and mines, thus entering another hell in the cities. The cities and urban centres were racially fragmented into two racial realms, feeding Fanon with the material to provide an informative comparison between the lives of natives and settlers within the urban colonial society

The settler's town is a strongly-built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly-lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage-cans swallow all the leavings, unseen, unknown and hardly thought about. The settler's feet are never visible, except perhaps in the sea; but there you're never close enough to see them. His feet are protected by strong shoes although the streets of his town are clean and even, with no holes or stones. The settler's town is well-fed town, an easy-going town; its belly is always full of good things. The settler's town is a town of white people, of foreigners (Fanon *Ibid*).

On the other side, is the town of the colonized people, which Fanon portrayed thus:

The town belonging to the colonized people [...] is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there; it matters not where, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other, and their huts are built one on top of the other. The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire (Fanon 1968a: 30).

A few examples will help explain how violence has its roots deep in colonial encounters and colonial modernity as well as how violence migrated from the colonial period into the postcolonial neo-colonized present.

Racist Manichean Misanthropic Scepticism in practice: German-Herero War, 1904-1907.

The causes and courses of the German-Herero War of 1904-1907 are well known and cannot detain us here as many scholars such as Drechsler (1980), Bridgman (1981), Gewalt (1999), and many others have dealt with these issues. At the same time, it is beyond dispute that the Germans committed genocide; hence the German government's apology of 2004 (Anderson

2005: 1155-1189). My concern here, however, is to demonstrate how the German-Herero War of 1904-1907 constitutes an example of how the 'racist/imperial Manichean misanthropic scepticism' was practised by Germans on the African soil. It demonstrates how the ethics that governed the conduct of war in Europe were suspended in the way the Germans dealt with the Herero people of Namibia. Even German national laws governing war were suspended alongside international laws.

The ill-treatment of the Herero people is here taken as a macrocosm of how colonial powers dealt with non-Western and colonized peoples in violation of such standing declarations as the 1890 Anti-Slavery Conference that took place in Brussels, Belgium, as well as treaty of friendship and protection of 1885 signed between Germany and the Herero people (Anderson 2005: 1158). This 'war of annihilation' that was supported by many Germans as a legitimate response of the colonial power against the Herero who were resisting colonial ill-treatment, could only take place outside Europe and the Western world because of deep-rooted racism that underpinned colonialism and imperialism. For instance, the German Colonial League's Executive Committee released a pamphlet calling for a brutal, swift and harsh response to the Herero uprising and this is how they racially profiled the Herero people and justified their annihilation:

Anyone familiar with the life of Africans and other less civilized non-white peoples knows that one can assert themselves only by maintaining the supremacy of their race. [...] The swifter and harsher the reprisals taken against rebels, the better the chances of restoring authority (cited in Anderson 2005: 1160).

The appointment of a rabid racist Lieutenant-General Lothar von Trotha by the German Emperor Kaiser Wilhelm II as the commander-in-chief of the German forces in Namibia was a clear indicator of the imperial intention to finish off the Herero people. Lieutenant-General von Trotha was an experienced and tested racist who was well-known for his brutal suppression of African resisters in East Africa where the Wahehe Uprising had broken out in 1896. He had also participated in the brutal suppression of the Boxer Uprising of 1901 in China (Drechsler 1980: 151). It was Lieutenant-General von Trotha that issued the infamous 'annihilation order' on 2 October 1904:

The Herero people will have to leave the country. Otherwise, I shall force them to do so by means of guns [...] Every Herero, whether found armed or unarmed [...] will be shot. I shall not accept any more women and children. I shall drive them back to their people—otherwise I shall order shots to be fired at them. These are my words to the Herero people (cited in Drechsler 1980: 156-157).

In a follow-up report to the chief of the German Army General Staff of 4 October 1904, Lieutenant-General von Trotha clearly expressed his intention to exterminate the Herero people:

The crucial question for me is how to bring the war against the Herero to a close [...] As I see it, the nation must be destroyed as such [...] I ordered the warriors to be court-martialled and hanged and all women and children who sought shelter here to be driven back into the sandveld [the Kalahari Desert] [...] To accept women and children who are for the most part sick, poses a grave risk to the force, and to feed them is out of the question. For this reason, I deem it wiser for the entire nation to perish [...] This uprising is and remains the beginning of a racial struggle (Excerpt from a Report from Lieutenant-General von Trotha to the Army Chief of Staff, 4 October 1904 cited in Drechsler 1980: 160-161).

The extermination order was enthusiastically carried out beginning with the hanging of Herero people who had been sentenced to death. They were publicly hanged where other Herero prisoners that included women and children were forced to come and watch (Anderson 2005: 1162). Lieutenant-General von Trotha even wrote a letter to Governor Leutwein on 27 October 1904 declaring that: 'The Herero nation must vanish from the face of the earth' (cited in Anderson 2005: 1162). The extermination of the Herero involved public hangings, random killing of any Herero found by the German army; and pushing others to the Omahenge Desert to die of hunger and thirst. Those who were not directly killed were taken into concentration camps where they were exposed to severe forced labour that led to death. Others became guinea-pigs for medical experiments. In total the Germans are said to have killed 65,000 Herero people out of a population of 80,000 (Drechsler 1980: 214; Anderson 2005: 1166).

Those members of the German nation who expressed opposition to the extermination of the Herero people were concerned about other issues rather than the humanity of the Herero. Their reasons ranged from economic reasons as African cheap labour was wanted for the colonial enterprise; saving the face of Christianity that was founded on humanistic principles; impact of extermination on the status of Germany as a civilized nation; and impossibility of the succeeding in the use of extermination as a war strategy (Drechsler 1980: 163-164). No wonder then that the German Emperor, Kaiser Wilhelm II, reluctantly rescinded the extermination order after the genocide had already been committed.

The treatment of the Herero by the Germans was a typical result of the practice of racist/imperial Manichean misanthropic skepticism founded on

doubting the very humanity of black people in general. It did not take place in Namibia alone but wherever all the wars of conquest were fought and in all colonial responses to African uprisings. What varied were the scales of killing. The Herero people were even denied the option of surrendering. This is how far colonial violence could go vis-à-vis black people.

Violence as a colonial mode of governance: King Leopold II and the Congo Free State

The way King Leopold II of Belgium turned the Congo into his personal 'massive labour colony' where 'the distinction between the law of persons and the law of things, of both humans and nonhumans' permeated his style of governance is another case of how violence was routinized in colonial Africa (Santos 2007: 52). To Leopold II, the colonized Congolese people were nothing but providers of cheap labour. The Congo Free State was a special type of colony owned by a single person, the King of Belgium. It was created in 1885 soon after the Berlin Conference that authorized the scramble and partition of Africa among European powers.

King Leopold's ventures into the Congo were from start to finish a catalogue of chicanery, violence and genocide. In the first place, his company, called Association Internationale Africaine (AIA), disguised its imperial and colonial ambitions and intentions under scientific and philanthropic designs. For instance, he justified his colonial interventions in these words:

Our only program, I am anxious to repeat, is the work of moral and material regeneration, and we must do this among a population whose degeneration in its inherited conditions it is difficult to measure. The many horrors and atrocities which disgraced humanity give way little by little before our intervention (cited in Religious Tolerance Organization, n.d.).

To acquire Congo, King Leopold II hired Henry Morton Stanley, a famous explorer who deceived African chiefs into signing away their land and power under the guise of treaties of friendship with a people who doubted their humanity in the first place. King Leopold II's takeover of Congo territory set in motion a brutal colonial regime unleashed on a polity of over 30 million people, turning them into the property of a single individual driven by a profit motive and unrestrained by any moral and ethical values besides those of making economic profits by any means necessary.

King Leopold's policies included introduction of the colonial idea of *terres vacantes* (the concept of vacant/empty lands). This was a common strategy to justify land expropriation. His next step was to demarcate Congolese

territory into two zones. The first was the *Free Trade Zone* that was to be the domain of Europeans. It was a domain of free entrepreneurial enterprises, private ownership of land, and freedom to buy 10-15 year monopoly leases on anything of value, including ivory and rubber. The second zone was the *Domaine Prive* (the exclusive private property of the state and this state was embodied in the person of King Leopold II). It made up almost two-thirds of the Congo. There was no designated place reserved for indigenous African people of Congo; instead, they were regrouped into ethnicized rural labour camps for easy mobilization and labour recruitment under the supervision of defeated and terrified native authorities serving colonial interests (Emerson 1979; Pakenham 1991; Hochschild 1998; Ewans 2003; Olson 2008).

Black Congolese people were expected to provide set quotas of rubber and ivory to state officials. They laboured to produce food for the state. They worked under conditions of forced labour and slavery. A notorious armed force known as *Force Publique* (FP) enforced the rubber quotas. The FP was armed with modern weapons and a bull whip made of hippopotamus hide. Black Congolese who failed to meet their rubber quotas had their hands cut; some were tortured and others killed. The brutality unleashed on this population could only happen to beings that were considered sub-humanity as it involved cutting of heads and hanging of bodies on the village palisades. The FP carried severed hands to the white officials as evidence that they were enforcing the law on those who failed to provide the needed rubber and ivory (Olson 2008). King Leopold's violent soldier-merchants killed over 10 million Congolese during his personal rule over the Congo Free State (Hochschild 1998). The violence also involved the kidnapping of women and children to force men to come out to work in rubber plantations, raping of women and burning of entire villages in what came to be known as 'scorched earth tactics'.

The current violence bedevilling the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has its roots in the violent reign of King Leopold. It was this same man who warlords that thrived by terrorizing the people. Moore (2001: 130-135) has found a linkage between the reigns of what he called 'King Leopold' and 'King Kabila'. Similarly, Mamdani (2011) has traced the present-day violence in the eastern part of the DRC to the time of dictatorship of King Leopold II who created homelands as ethnicized labour colonies supervised by 'native/black' authorities. The re-organization of the indigenous population into rigid ethnic homelands enabled easy colonial organization for recruitment of cheap and forced labour. This colonial arrangement inaugurated rigid ethnic identities and sensibilities as recruitment for mines, plantations, civil service,

and army became based on tribal identity. For instance, in the diamond-rich Katanga region which experienced labour migration, ethnic identities became fragmented into Lunda who were considered indigenous, and the Luba who were again subdivided into indigenous and non-indigenous. The Luba who had migrated from neighbouring Kasai, were divided into 'Luba-Katanga' (those who had moved to Katanga prior to colonialism and were considered as indigenous) and 'Luba-Kasai' (classified as non-indigenous) (Mamdani 2011).

A colonial policy of ethnic 'regrouping' also took place in other parts of DRC such as Ituri and Kivu. Here the predominantly pastoral Hema were separated from Lendu populations, forcing each into its own homeland known as *territoire* supervised by a native tribal authority known as *chefferie* (Mamdani 2011). The long-term impact of this ethnic regrouping was predictable: First, when Congolese nationalism emerged, it did so as a deeply ethnicized political force. Second, the question of who was indigenous to particular areas led to the present-day question of citizenship that is generating violence in the eastern part of the DRC bordering Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. The existence of 'Banyarwanda' and 'Banyamulenge' consisting of Hutu, Tutsi and Batwa has heightened the citizenship struggles and violence (Mamdani 2011).

Since the time of Leopold II, those who succeeded him including Patrice Lumumba, Mobutu Sese Seko, Laurent Kabila and Joseph Kabila have not managed to deal effectively with the questions of indignity and citizenship in the DRC. Colonialism invented indigene versus non-indigene dichotomies that have continued to breed intra-and inter-communal violence in the DRC. Some of the central state interventions politicized citizenship rather than solving the contestations rooted in bifurcation of Congolese into races of the cities and tribes of the countryside. Furthermore, the fluid migrant labour system added new layers of identities. Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002) blamed Patrice Lumumba for making the first major political blunder in trying to solve the Katangese secession through taking sides with one ethnic group in a struggle involving so-called 'indigenes' and 'non-indigenes'. Lumumba deployed the national army that went on the commit atrocities on one ethnic group, thus exacerbating the problem rather than solving it.

There were other complicated resolutions of the indigene versus non-indigene problems in the DRC, such as Mobutu's Citizenship Decree of 1972 that was prompted by increasing numbers of Hutu migrants running away from massacres in Burundi. The decree extended citizenship to all those who arrived in the DRC in 1959-1960. It provoked immediate protests from

Kivu residents who feared increasing numbers of Rwandese and Burundians (Mamdani 2011). The citizenship problem was further complicated by the Nationality Law of 1981 that restricted citizenship to people who could demonstrate an ancestral connection with Congo at the time of the Berlin Conference of 1885 (Mamdani 2011). In short, the violence that is currently haunting the DRC is intermingled with the question of citizenship whose roots are traceable to the time of Leopold II.

Identity politics created warlords who claim to be representing particular regions and particular ethnic groups such as the Mayi-Mayi that claim the status of indigenous people and the Banyamulenge that are excluded as non-indigenous. What is clear is that the DRC is paying a heavy prize in terms of inter-and intra-communal violence that has its deep roots in colonial regrouping schemes that created rigid and antagonistic ethnicities. This reality has led some analysts to doubt whether the DRC really exists as a nation.

Neo-apartheid and systemic violence in South Africa

South Africa can be best described as a 'contact zone' that is a space in which peoples of different races and ethnicities who were geographically and historically separated came into contact with each other and established ongoing relations mediated by conditions of coercion and inequalities that provoke intractable conflicts and violence (Pratt 1992: 6). At the centre of South Africa are racialized-ethnicities and ethnicized races that have all been struggling to be South African. What being South African means remains a form of 'state of becoming' and is the subject of contestations together with the concomitant question of who is a South African that is complicated by rival populisms and claims and counter-claims to nativity and indigeneity.

Blacks, Whites, Indians, Coloureds, Chinese and other racial groups have gone through several historical epochs and contacts but full assimilation into a singular and stable national identity is still in the making and is not following a smooth path that the traditional sociological assimilation school of thought projected based on metropolitan European migration models (Gordon 1964). We cannot, for instance, say that all South African groups were currently passing through several stages in the process of assimilation into the host African society. A claim to nativity and indigeneity by any single ethnic or racial group has the potential to render others stateless. No wonder, whites have often contested the claims of blacks to nativity despite the fact that they were the ones who called the African people 'natives' to distinguish them from whites and to exclude them from the wealth of the nation and conserve them into a reserve army

to provide cheap labour (see Chapter Six for more historical exposition of the South Africa situation).

What makes South Africa unique in Africa is that its social complexion is very complex indeed. South Africa's social structure resembles that of an empire permeated by a violent colonial experience and where a strong racial/ethnic hierarchy persists. There is no space for migrant incorporation and assimilation into white society as white colonial subjects of the empire (English and Afrikaners) assumed nativity and, in the process, excluded the indigenous black people from the nation -- creating what Neocosmos (2006) termed 'native foreigners' and 'foreign natives'. It is a country characterized by layers and layers of competing and complex identities.

The first layer consists of various black ethnic groups that experienced colonial conquest, colonization and apartheid domination. Examples include the Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele, San, Khoi Khoi, Suthu and other identities. The second layer consisted of 'colonial-racial subjects' who came to South Africa as part of a long imperial/colonial history, and examples include the English, Afrikaners, Indians, Malay and Chinese. Following the thinking of Grosfoguel (2008: 608) these groups can be termed 'colonial/racial subjects of empire'. They emerged within a highly racialized empire with discourses constructed in relation to these subjects as they interacted with indigenous black peoples.

In South Africa, the white colonial-racial subjects of the empire succeeded in assuming power and dominating indigenous black people and other non-white subjects of the empire like Indians and the Coloureds. The indigenous black African people occupied the bottom of the racial/ethnic hierarchy while in metropolitan empires like Britain, the indigenous whites are at the top and the colonial-racial subjects are at the bottom. The other development is that it became impossible for white colonial-racial subjects of the empire to be absorbed by the indigenous black African majority that they despised and dominated. Rather, the indigenous black majority races found themselves struggling to be incorporated into the white dominant state and well provisioned white society. It became very difficult for assimilation to take place. But only white immigrants from Europe were easily assimilated ahead of indigenous black people into the white-constructed state and society.

The other layer was that of black immigrants from within the African continent who, when they arrived in South Africa, had to join the ranks of black indigenous people languishing at the bottom of the racial hierarchy. New forms of racialization and ethnicization processes developed such as the 'Nigerianization' of West Africans and 'Zimbabweanization' of others.

Indigenous black South Africans struggled to racialize each other with those Africans who were phenotypically darker than others suffering 'Nigerianization'. Those who experienced 'Zimbabweanization' were subjected to crude language tests. At the bottom of racial hierarchy created by the coloniality of power were black indigenous South Africans and black immigrants who had to compete over scarce resources. This situation has generated to what is commonly termed xenophobic violence (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009).

What has escaped critical analysis is the fact that South Africa has never been decolonized and deracialized. In 1910, it gained what can be correctly be termed 'colonial independence' (independence without decolonization); hence the black indigenous people remained dominated and exploited. In 1994, South Africa gained liberal democracy without decolonization. Again the indigenous black population found itself still languishing at the bottom of racial/ethnic hierarchy. Even politicians within the African National Congress (ANC) did not talk about 'independence day' but about 'freedom day'. Whose freedom it was remains a key question. A few black people were able to take advantage of favourable state policies such as Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and Affirmative Action (AA) to climb up the social and economic ladder into the middle stratum/middle class status. Examples include Cyril Ramaphosa, Patrice Motsepe, Irvin Khoza and others called the 'black diamonds'. These people were used by dominant white groups as showcases to counter accusations of racial discrimination and to hide continuations of racial discrimination.

The reality that continues to generate violence is the enduring old colonial/racial order during established several centuries of successive colonial and apartheid administrations. South Africa is currently in the 'neo-apartheid' period not 'post-apartheid'. The key feature of the neo-apartheid era is the economic exclusion of the black majorities and the economic dominance of a white minority. Neo-apartheid is also characterized by featuring some black faces at the top of political hierarchy, including the presidency but without any meaningful social change for the majority of black people from whom the black political leaders emerged. Neo-apartheid also projects itself in the form of racialization of criminality in which the black face remains the symbol of criminality. Even poverty is racialized in a neo-apartheid situation (Grosfoguel 2008: 615).

Neo-apartheid also manifests itself through segregation of the excluded black poor through urban cartography which distinguished between the *damne* and the civilized zones. Santos (2007: 59) called this situation 'fascism of social apartheid'. The South African urban black poor have remained cocooned in

black townships and *imikhukhu* (shacks) as zones of Hobbesian state of nature dominated by internal civil strife and violence. Santos concluded that:

As social fascism coexists with liberal democracy, the state of exception coexists with constitutional normalcy, civil society coexists with the state of nature, and indirect rule coexists with rule of law (Santos 2007: 62).

This is the situation currently obtaining in South Africa, a country that has an acclaimed democratic constitution but has maintained its strong racial/ethnic hierarchy constructed by colonialism and apartheid. The politics of compromise did not alter the existing status quo where in the white minority races were privileged by both colonialism and apartheid. Fanon depicted the compromises made between African nationalists and white oppressors as a strategy of avoiding a full-blown revolution through capturing the African leadership and turning the liberation movement to the right and thereby disarm the African people (Fanon 1963: 55).

Conclusion

One of the intriguing questions in the study of violence in Africa has been how to explain the continuation of colonial violence well into the postcolonial and post-apartheid periods. Why have African nationalists, some of whom were put in power by popular vote, fail to govern without resorting to violence as a form of governance. It is understandable that colonial governments were imposed on African societies by force of arms; hence they had to govern by violence. A coloniality perspective in general, and a coloniality of being in particular, provides some answers to this question of continuation of violence across colonial and postcolonial epochs.

Fanon has analysed how colonial violence influenced the colonized to be violent. In the first place, he noted that the abused and violated colonized people 'manifest this aggressiveness which has been deposited in his bones against his own people' (Fanon 1968a: 40). In the second place, he explained that the colonized people's confrontation with the 'colonial order of things' places them in 'a permanent state of tension' (Fanon 1963: 41). In the third place, Fanon argued that. 'The native is an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become the persecutor' (Fanon 1968a: 41).

Fanon also argued that violence used in particular ways during the decolonization struggle 'does not magically disappear after the ceremony of trooping the national colours'. He explained the continuation of violence as informed by 'cut-throat competition between capitalism and socialism' (Fanon 1968a: 59). But now that socialism is dead and there is no 'cut-throat'

ideological competition, how is the continuation of violence to be explained in postcolonial Africa? Friedrich Nietzsche (1990: 102) reiterated thesis rather aptly. According to him, 'He who fights with monsters should look to it that he himself does not become a monster. And when you gaze long into an abyss the abyss also gazes into you.' Fanon had this to say about continuation of violence after colonialism:

The atmosphere of violence, after having coloured all the colonial phase, continues to dominate national life, for as we have already said, the Third World is not cut off from the rest. This is why the statesmen of under-developed countries keep up indefinitely the tone of aggressiveness and exasperation in their public speeches which in the normal way ought to have disappeared (Fanon 1968a: 60).

A typical example of the statesmen described here is President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe who consistently rails Western powers while simultaneously maintaining a very oppressive and violent regime at home (see Chapter Seven to this book). What is beyond doubt is that the colonial culture of violence formed a seedbed for future cultures of violence in the postcolonial era. The culture of violence simply reproduced itself in the psyche of African nationalist and liberation fronts because they needed the nationalist violence to eject the colonial violence oppressing them .

Those Africans who participated in the armed liberation struggles were taken on a course to 'gaze' into the colonial abyss of violence and in the course of fighting the colonial monsters, African liberation fighters underwent a process of becoming 'monsteris' too. It is no wonder that a leader like Mugabe, who actively participated and led the liberation struggle, often brags about his party's ability to unleash violence on its political opponents. Finally, the continuation of violence is one indicator of the continuation of coloniality after the end of colonialism.