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Parochialism and Divarication in the Reparation, Restitution and Restoration Colloquy in African History

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ABSTRACT

Africa's experiences with the west is informed by three major historical periods: The slave trade era, marked by the most brazen dehumanization of the African person and toughest restriction of her potentialities; the era of colonialism wherein, colonialists established themselves in Africa to exact maximum profit for repatriation and so, institutionalized 'growth without development' in Africa and the neo-colonial era (which dovetailed with the age of globalization); the most pernicious, for western exploitation this time around, was in connivance with megalomaniac African. Against this osmotic background the backlash was felt in every aspect of the African life. From this backdrop, this paper draws from extant authoritative secondary literature and oral information, to argue that since the slave trade, colonialism and neo-colonialism left almost indelible and ineffaceable hideous imprints on the African continent, the effusing acts and literary discourses on restitution and/restoration to Africa should be correspondingly holistic and eclectic. It follows that, the incipient phase of the restitution colloquy that confines itself to the reparation and repatriation of African cultural and human remains lodged in western museums relapses into parochialism and dimwittedness in the context of the length and depth of western plunder and pillage in Africa. Again, considering that the lead-up for the recent flurrying of restitution literature, seminars and conferences was president Emmanuel Macron's 2017 speech delivered in Ouagadougou and the ensuing Sarr and Savoy report, this paper further contends that the restoration of African artistic works does not fall short of a smokescreen to other western pernicious schemes in Africa. It is an expression of the Eurocentric cliché notion that only the west can prescribe the panacea for Africa malaise. The thread of reasoning sustained in this paper aligns with the view of Achille Mbembe who

intimates that, Europe would not have the right to restitute African objects as it would close easily a difficult chapter of history

Keywords: Transatlantic Slave Trade, Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Emmanuel Macron, Achille Mbembe

BACKGROUND

The debate over the restitution and repatriation of African cultural artifacts is rooted in the complex historical, political, and ethical legacies of colonialism and imperialism. During the colonial era, European powers systematically acquired, looted, and often forcibly removed cultural artifacts from African societies, claiming they were part of a broader civilizing mission (Meyer, 2014). These artifacts, ranging from masks, sculptures, and religious objects to ancient manuscripts, became symbols of colonial dominance, often displayed in European museums and homes that functioned as repositories of imperial power and cultural superiority (Oguibe, 2018). The acquisition of these artifacts was frequently accompanied by acts of coercion, deception, or outright theft, which have led to ongoing disputes over rightful ownership and cultural patrimony.

The post-independence period marked a turning point in Africa's engagement with these stolen artifacts. As many African nations gained independence in the mid-20th century, they began to challenge the legitimacy of Western ownership of their cultural heritage. The 20th century saw the emergence of calls for restitution and repatriation, emphasizing the importance of cultural sovereignty and moral justice. The UNESCO Convention of 1970 was among the first international efforts to address these concerns, although it primarily focused on preventing illicit trafficking rather than explicitly advocating for restitution (UNESCO, 1970). Despite this, many African nations and cultural advocates considered the convention insufficient, viewing it as a diplomatic compromise that did not sufficiently confront colonial looting.

The debate intensified in the 21st century, driven by increased awareness of colonial histories and the moral imperatives for justice and reconciliation. High-profile cases, such as the Benin Bronzes stolen during the 1897 British Punitive Expedition and held in museums across Europe, have become emblematic of the broader struggles over cultural restitution (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). These artifacts are not merely art objects but are deeply embedded with historical, spiritual, and cultural significance for their communities of origin. Returning them is viewed by many as a moral obligation and a step toward addressing historical injustices.

However, the debate is far from straightforward. Opponents argue that many artifacts have been part of global collections for over a century and have acquired international cultural value, making their

repatriation complex. Critics also raise practical concerns about the logistics of returning artifacts, issues of provenance, and the potential for damage or loss during transit. Furthermore, some European institutions claim that they have preserved these artifacts for global audiences, emphasizing their role in fostering cross-cultural understanding (Meyer, 2014). The tension between cultural sovereignty and global heritage preservation continues to underpin this debate.

Legal considerations further complicate the discourse. While some argue that colonial acquisition was illegitimate and thus void, others contend that existing legal frameworks, such as the 1970 UNESCO Convention and national laws, provide ambiguous guidance, leading to contentious negotiations (Oguibe, 2018). Many African countries have initiated diplomatic and legal claims for the restitution of specific artifacts, often citing principles of moral justice, historical right, and cultural integrity. These claims have led to a series of successful repatriations, such as the return of the Benin Bronzes by Germany and recent discussions with French authorities concerning artifacts held in Paris museums.

The debate also involves broader questions about the meaning of cultural ownership, the ethics of museum collections, and the legacies of colonialism. It has prompted calls for a reevaluation of global museum practices, advocating for more inclusive narratives and the active participation of African communities in determining the fate of their cultural heritage (Oguibe, 2018). The growing activism around restitution signifies a shift towards recognizing cultural artifacts as living symbols of identity and sovereignty rather than mere objects of aesthetic or historical interest. As the discourse continues to evolve, the core issues remain centered on justice, reparations, and the reclamation of African history and identity.

REVIEW OF RELEVANT CONCEPTS

Reparation

Reparation is a concept rooted in the moral and legal obligation to make amends for injustices committed, often involving compensation, acknowledgment, or other forms of redress. Scholars have debated its scope, purpose, and implementation within the context of historical injustices, such as colonial exploitation and cultural theft. Iris Marion Young (2003) articulates that reparations serve as a moral response to address structural inequalities and historical wrongs, emphasizing that they are not merely material but also symbolic acts that acknowledge suffering and restore dignity. She argues that reparations must be comprehensive, including both tangible compensation and symbolic acknowledgment, to be effective in fostering social justice.

Similarly, W.E.B. Du Bois (1915) emphasized the importance of reparations for African Americans, arguing that economic and social compensation are essential for addressing the legacies of slavery and

racial discrimination, asserting that true justice requires acknowledging the depth of racial injustices and repairing their damages. On a different note, Jürgen Habermas (2006) approaches reparations from a discourse ethics perspective, emphasizing that moral acknowledgment and dialogue are central to the reparative process, advocating for an inclusive debate involving victims and perpetrators to reach mutual understanding and consent.

Critics, however, like Lacey (2009), caution that reparations can be fraught with political and practical challenges, such as defining who qualifies as victims, determining appropriate measures, and ensuring that reparations do not reinforce divisiveness. In the African context, reparations are increasingly seen as a moral imperative to acknowledge colonial exploitation, cultural theft, and economic dispossession, with calls for both material compensation and symbolic acts of acknowledgment. African scholars like Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) emphasize that reparations must also involve decolonizing knowledge and restoring cultural identities, positioning reparations as a crucial step toward addressing the deep scars of colonialism and fostering genuine reconciliatio

Restitution

Restitution is a concept that emphasizes the return of stolen or unlawfully taken assets, artifacts, or rights to their rightful owners or communities. It is often viewed as a moral and legal remedy to rectify past injustices, especially in cases of cultural theft, property dispossession, or wrongful imprisonment. Scholars like David Scheffer (2012) define restitution as a legal principle rooted in the notion that unjust enrichment must be reversed, advocating for the return of artifacts, land, or assets to correct wrongful gains. Scheffer underscores that restitution is fundamental in transitional justice contexts, where recognizing and repairing past harms is essential for societal reconciliation.

In the context of cultural restitution, Oguibe (2018) argues that returning African artifacts stolen during colonialism is crucial for restoring cultural sovereignty and affirming indigenous identities. He posits that restitution goes beyond legal obligations; it embodies moral responsibility and respect for cultural integrity, emphasizing that artifacts are not mere objects but symbols of community memory and history.

Conversely, critics like Meyer (2014) raise concerns about the complexities involved in establishing provenance, dealing with contested ownership claims, and the potential for artifacts to be damaged during transit. Moreover, some scholars highlight that restitution raises questions about the scope and limits of return, especially when artifacts have been integrated into global collections for extended periods. Nonetheless, the increasing trend of successful restitutions, such as the return of Benin Bronzes by European institutions, demonstrates an evolving recognition of the importance of restitution as a form of justice and acknowledgment of historical wrongs. For African nations, restitution is intertwined with

sovereignty and cultural revival, asserting that returning artifacts is a moral obligation rooted in justice and respect for cultural heritag

Restoration

Restoration refers to the broader process of repairing or rehabilitating cultural, social, or political systems that have been damaged or destabilized due to historical injustices, such as colonialism, war, or repression. It encompasses not only the physical repair of artifacts or institutions but also the moral, cultural, and political revival of communities and identities. Scholars like Walter Mignolo (2011) view restoration as a decolonial act, restoring indigenous knowledge systems, cultural practices, and sovereignty that colonial powers sought to erase or subordinate. He emphasizes that true restoration involves a profound shift from Western-centric paradigms to indigenous frameworks that recognize the validity of local epistemologies and cultural expressions.

Similarly, Achille Mbembe (2017) underscores the importance of political and social restoration in post-colonial Africa, advocating for the rebuilding of democratic institutions, social cohesion, and economic independence. He suggests that restoration must be participatory, inclusive, and rooted in local contexts to be meaningful. Critics like Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2014) caution that restoration efforts can sometimes be superficial or symbolic, lacking genuine engagement with affected communities or failing to address underlying structural inequalities. Furthermore, scholars argue that restoration cannot be merely about returning to a pre-injustice state but must involve transformative processes that create new, more equitable social arrangements. In the African context, restoration is viewed as multi-dimensional, restoring cultural artifacts through restitution, reviving indigenous practices, and rebuilding political institutions to foster genuine sovereignty and cultural revival. It is a continuous, dynamic process that requires addressing the legacies of colonialism while empowering local communities to shape their future.

REVIEW OF RELATED THEORIES

Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory has been prominently advanced by scholars such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Said's foundational work *Orientalism* (1978) critically examined how colonial narratives constructed the East and Africa as inferior, justifying imperial domination. Bhabha's concept of *hybridity* and *mimicry* further elucidates the complex identities forged in postcolonial spaces, emphasizing the enduring influence of colonial power structures (Bhabha, 1994). Spivak's work on *subalternity* highlights marginalized voices in postcolonial societies, advocating for their agency in

historical narratives. These thinkers collectively argue that colonialism has left deep scars on cultural identities, which must be addressed through processes of decolonization, including restitution.

The postcolonial theory presumes that colonialism was not merely a political or economic enterprise but also a cultural project that imprinted hierarchical narratives upon colonized peoples. It assumes that cultural artifacts seized during colonialism are symbols of ongoing imperial dominance and that their restitution is a form of restoring agency and sovereignty to formerly colonized peoples (Young, 2001). The theory emphasizes that contemporary cultural and political struggles are rooted in colonial legacies that continue to shape identities and power relations. Consequently, restitution is viewed as a necessary act of decolonization that challenges imperial narratives and restores cultural integrity.

Postcolonial theory critiques the colonial legacy embedded in cultural artifacts and frames restitution as a decolonizing act. It argues that returning artifacts constitutes a symbolic and material rectification of historical injustices, disrupting colonial narratives of superiority and cultural theft. The theory underscores that the process of restitution is intertwined with struggles for sovereignty, recognition, and cultural revival (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). It advocates for a redefinition of global cultural authority that centers indigenous voices and perspectives, challenging Western-centric notions of ownership and provenance.

Despite its influential insights, postcolonial theory faces criticisms for its sometimes abstract and broad scope, which can overlook practical and legal complexities involved in restitution. Critics argue that it may romanticize indigenous cultures and underestimate the importance of legal frameworks or the diverse interests involved (Baker, 2005). Moreover, some scholars contend that postcolonial theory risks essentializing cultures or promoting identity politics at the expense of nuanced, pragmatic solutions. Additionally, critics point out that it may lack clear pathways for implementing restitution policies, especially in the context of contested provenance and international law.

In the context of African artifact restitution, postcolonial theory provides a compelling framework emphasizing decolonization and cultural sovereignty. It advocates for the return of artifacts not only as material objects but as symbols of reclaiming history and identity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). This perspective encourages policymakers and institutions to re-evaluate colonial acquisitions, recognizing the importance of indigenous narratives, and challenging the legitimacy of Western museums holding artifacts stolen during colonial rule. It also underscores the importance of involving African communities in the restitution process, thereby fostering a process of cultural healing and empowerment.

Reparative Justice Theory

Reparative justice derives from the broader field of justice studies and is rooted in the work of scholars such as Iris Marion Young, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Jürgen Habermas. Young's *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990) emphasizes the importance of repairing historical injustices through acknowledgment and restitution. W. E. B. Du Bois highlighted the importance of reparations for African Americans, emphasizing the ongoing effects of historical injustices. Habermas's discourse ethics stresses the importance of dialogue and mutual recognition in achieving justice (Habermas, 1996). Reparative justice contends that injustices—such as cultural theft—must be addressed through concrete acts of restitution, acknowledgment, and reconciliation to restore dignity and fairness.

Reparative justice assumes that historical injustices, including the theft of cultural artifacts, have ongoing material and symbolic consequences for marginalized communities. It presumes that justice involves not only legal remedies but also moral acknowledgment and social repair (Young, 1990). The theory advocates that reparations should be tailored to address specific historical harms, recognizing the agency of victims and communities in defining what constitutes justice. It emphasizes that restitution is a moral obligation that can help heal social divisions and foster reconciliation, especially in post-colonial contexts where colonial violence and dispossession have left enduring scars.

Reparative justice argues that addressing historical injustices requires active measures such as restitution, compensation, and acknowledgment. It contends that returning African artifacts stolen during colonialism is a moral imperative that recognizes the sovereignty and dignity of African communities. Restitution, under this framework, is not merely about returning objects but about healing wounds inflicted by colonial violence, restoring cultural integrity, and fostering social reconciliation. The theory emphasizes that justice must be context-specific and participatory, involving victims and affected communities in defining what reparations entail (Fraser, 2008). It promotes a paradigm shift from punitive models to restorative practices that prioritize dignity and social repair.

Reparative justice faces criticism for its potential ambiguity and challenges in implementation. Critics argue that it can be difficult to determine the scope and scale of reparations, especially when dealing with complex histories of dispossession and contested provenance (Lacey, 2009). There are also concerns about political feasibility and the risk of re-traumatizing communities through prolonged negotiations. Moreover, some scholars question whether reparative justice can adequately address the global and systemic nature of colonial injustices, or if it risks becoming symbolic gestures without substantive change. Critics advocate for careful, context-sensitive approaches that balance moral imperatives with practical realities.

Applying reparative justice to African artifact restitution involves recognizing the moral obligation to repair the harms inflicted through colonial theft. Restitution is framed as a moral act that acknowledges

historical dispossession, restores cultural sovereignty, and fosters healing. It emphasizes inclusive processes where African communities participate in defining restitution policies, ensuring that returns are meaningful and culturally appropriate (Lacey, 2009). The approach prioritizes dialogue, acknowledgment, and the active involvement of African nations and communities, aligning with broader efforts toward decolonization and social justice. Restitution under this framework becomes a pathway towards rectifying historical wrongs and fostering reconciliation in post-colonial Africa.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative, interdisciplinary research methodology to critically analyze the historical, political, social, cultural, and psychological impacts of European globalization and the restitution debate concerning African artifacts. The primary approach involves an extensive literature review of scholarly books, journal articles, policy documents, and reports from reputable sources such as academic journals, UNESCO, UNCTAD, and international human rights organizations. A thematic analysis framework guides the systematic coding and synthesis of data across key themes: economic, political, social, cultural, and psychological effects, as well as the conceptual debates surrounding restitution and reparations. This involves identifying recurring patterns, contrasting perspectives, and case-specific examples from different African regions (e.g., French West Africa, Portuguese Angola, British East Africa) to ensure contextual richness and comparative insights. To enhance reliability, the study cross-references multiple sources and employs critical discourse analysis to evaluate underlying narratives and power dynamics. Given the historical and normative nature of the topic, the methodology emphasizes interpretive analysis over empirical data collection, aiming to produce a nuanced understanding of the complex legacies of colonialism and globalization. Ethical considerations involve acknowledging the sensitivities around cultural heritage and respecting indigenous perspectives, emphasizing the importance of voice and agency for African communities in the restitution discourse. This methodological approach ensures a comprehensive, balanced, and scholarly foundation for discussing the multifaceted impacts of European globalization and the ongoing debates on cultural restitution in Africa.

RESTITUTION AND RESTORATION IN AFRICA

The Context of Current Restitution Debate

The lead-up for the recent avalanche of academic exchanges on the delicate and tortuous subject of restitution, repatriation, and restoration of African material culture was the French president Emmanuel Macron's November 28th, 2017 speech in the University of Ouagadougou. In the presence of the president of Burkina Faso, Roch Kabore, the eminent African historian - Professor Ki-Zerbo and several

hundreds of Burkinabé students lodged in an Amphitheatre, the French president noted "starting today and within the next five years, I want to see the conditions put in place so as to allow for the temporary or definitive restitution of African cultural heritage to Africa. (Sarr and Savoy 2018). The corollary to this ambiguous oration was that Benedicte Savoy and Felwine Sarr received presidential writs ruling them to engage in a transparent and participatory dialogue with the various stakeholders most concerned by these issues: museums, lawyers, international organizations, art market, academics, both in Europe, where you will seek to mobilize our main partners, and on the African continent.

It was against this background that the famous Sarr and Savoy report was developed. The report elicited a protean debate on the already well-known question of the return of looted or sent African art objects lodged in European homes and museums. According to Apoh and Mehler (2020), the president's speech and the publication of the commissioned Sarr and Savoy report were landmark events and the ensuing debate is the penultimate step in a long decolonization process that will culminate with African communities being reunited with their long lost and looted antiquities. Admittedly, the value of restituting African lost heritage is grossly important for it would afford the progenies of the colonized the right to have their esteemed objects of their respective cultures back with them, objects that were taken against their volition n. The restitution colloquy is an enticement to reminisce the manner of appropriation and alienation of the almost ineffaceable institution of the colonial system and why not, the indignities of European slave trade in Africa. In this context, the restitution of Africa's arts, products of indigenous ingenuity carted and lodged for centuries in western institutions is to speak veritably of justice rebalancing, recognition and restoration of Africa's arts.

The restitution argument is that, European and North American Museums, host an overwhelmingly large quantities of Africa's collections with colonial legacies leaving the countries of origin with almost nothing. The need to return these works of artistic brilliance to Africa has ever been urgent but the actual return rest on a dilemma: "Can we be sure that these objects would be as well-kept and preserved as they are in first world countries? (Doyle 2019). There is acceptance notwithstanding of the claims of the original owners of the objects but in the light of this dilemma, Sebuliba, Nesche and Xylander (2022) cautions that the solicitors need to understand their responsibility, their commitments and the maintenance cost that comes with collections. In other words and stangely so, Africans should know that the return of the objects should always be accomplished by ensuring properly curated facilities that guarantee state-of-the-arts maintenance, access for the world's scientific community and high quality research facilities(Sebuliba, Wesche and Xylander, 2021, 322) This position places the onus of restitution on the victims. That is, Africans should create the necessary enabling conditions for the return of what was taken from them coercibly in the most dehumanizing demeanor. The position of this writeup is that the debate

on restitution and repatriation of arts works stolen from Africa in view of the total indignities and still lingering effects of western crimes on Africa is parochial and divaricated

Parochialism and Divarication in the Restitution Colloquy

Evidently, the Sarr and Savoy report at the behest of president Emmanuel Macron indicate clearly that western nations have avowed their culpability for the generational crimes against African states. Without being goaded, France conceded to the fact that colonization was a crime against humanity and that colonization was a significant part of French history, a true example of barbarism and that "it was an example of this past history that we must have the courage to confront by earnestly apologizing to those towards whom we have committed this acts" (Sarr & Savoy 2018, 2). For Germany, it took 100 years before they could accept and apologize to the Heroros of former South West Africa who were unfortunate victims of a genocide by poisoning, deportations, forced labor, and death just because they defied the obnoxious German colonial law of 1904. Then in 2008 Italy concluded 40 years of bitter co-existence with Libya when she made amends for the deep wounds inflicted on people residing in the then Italian colony between 1911 and 1943. Britain accepted guilt in 2013, after several lengthy court sessions for the cruel repression and tortures meted on the nationalists Mau Mau fighters of Kenya throughout the 1950's (Sarr & Savoy 2018, 2)

It is possible that Belgium lacks the moral courage to apologize to the people of the Congo for the uncivilized and incomparable inhumanness meted on the colonial people albeit to satisfy the greed of the monstrous King Leopold. The culpability of the west and its public or tacit acceptance of the crimes committed against Africa during colonialism clearly indicates that circumscribing the restitution discourse to African cultural heritage is narrow even if the debate is intended to open merely one chapter in a much larger and certainly much vaster history(Sarr &Savoy, 2018). colonialism had multiple repercussions. It was total, having political, military, cultural, and psychological consequences for the people of the world. It continues to control the economy, the politics and cultures of Africa. Economic and political control could never be complete or even effective without mental control and to control a people's culture is actually to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others (Fanon 1967, 16). It was total conquest and oppression of the Peoples of Africa. This domination was not exercised piecemeal. Immediately after the military conquest, the alterations of African political systems and economic rape and socio-cultural distortions of African resources and cultural lifeways was concurrent. It's our submission that since colonialism was total restitution from and by those who have realized their errors should be holistic as well. To acknowledge one's crimes and decide to correct them gradually is pure Machiavellian thought. Writing to advice to the prince of Medici on how new rulers could secure and hold power, Machiavelli noted:

Determine all the injuries that he will need to inflict. He then must inflict them once for all, and not have to renew them every day.… Violence must be inflicted once for all; people will then forget what it tastes like and so be less resentful. Benefits must be conferred gradually, and in that way, they will taste better (Machiavelli 1999, 32).

Admittedly, for Africa, the injuries and violence of the west were inflicted in totality during the European slave trade and colonial era. But unlike Machiavelli, the western violence and rapaciousness against Africans were too deep to be forgotten generations after. Despite the attainment of flag independence in the 1960s, and considering that no colonialist nation was willing to withdraw from Africa without having exhausted all the possibilities of maintaining itself (Fanon 1967, 155) the inherited political and economic colonial institutions have remained virtually unrestructured and the cultural and psychological imbalances injected then have remained indelible. To prosecute the restitution colloquy by repatriating African cultural heritage is a theory of statecraft intended to keep despoiled Africa at the mercy of the West and by so doing, maintain their strangle hold of African economies. The appeasement of African states by deciding to open discussions on the possible short term or definitive return of cultural products of African ingenuity has refused to taste better. Africa wants total restitution.

Again, another question that must not be ignored is that asked by Apoh and Mehler (2020): Why did politicians and part of the public in Europe got suddenly interested (again) in the question of colonial subjects? This sequel another question: Was President Macron and the authors of the commissioned report sincere about the restitution of African cultural objects? This incertitude was understandable because the need for and request for restitution is almost trite yet the west especially France has consistently spurned apertures to restitute looted African arts on grounds that no object have become inalienable. After receiving the large Asante Stool in Accra from the Queen of England in 1957, Ghanaians have waited in vain to received larger portions of Asante cultural heritage and property looted during the punitive expedition of 1874 against Kumassi especially a spectacular golden head lodged in the Wallace Foundation. Request for this was made in 1974. Immediately after attaining statehood in 1960, Zaire requested that Belgium should transfer the Museum of the Congo -Tervuren Museum to Kinshasa. Fifteen years after, only 144 pieces out 122000 objects inventoried at the museum were received after difficult negotiations. Through ICOM, Nigeria requested that western museums should return several significant pieces of cultural heritage emanating from Benin to a national Museum newly created in Lagos. No response was ever received. The pan-African Cultural Manifesto of Algiers in 1969 became bent on taking needful steps including appealing to international institutions, to recuperate Arts works and archives seized by colonial nations and to also take necessary steps to stop the drain of cultural assets leaving the continent of Africa (Sarr & Savoy 2018, 18). All these were ignored. According to M'bow

(2009) and Van Beurden (2015), demands and pleas for repatriation and restitution of looted and illegally acquired African cultural objects in European museums back to their African source communities also gained currency since the 1970s but strangely, vivid discussions of the late 1970^s and early 1980s ended abruptly in the mid-1980s and only individual claims for the return of specific objects were sporadically voiced (Apoh and Mehler, 2020). Since then the next opportunity to discuss restitution was the French Presidents speech delivered at Ouagadougou in 2017 and the authorized and guided Sarr and Savoy report in 2018.

It should be noted that on 26th August 2016, the year preceding President Macron's speech in Ouagadougou, the Benin Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Aurélien Agbenonci requested for the return of anthropomorphic statues with the mien of royal emblems looted by French Colonel, Alfred Dodds, during the plundering of the palace of Abomey in 1892. Lodged in the Trocadero Museum of Ethnography, a Beninese messenger reinforced the demands by stating that the looted works of arts possessed spiritual and historical relevance for Benin and for the people's collective memory. The French responded to this after four months, stating unapologetically and inter-alia that:

France ratified in 1997 the UNESCO Convention of 1970 concerning the illicit exportation of cultural property; but that this convention has no retroactive scope and in conforming to the legislature in place cannot be applied to the treasures of Abomey whose inalienability remained intact" (Sarr and Savoy, 2018).

In 2016, France admitted the legitimacy of the request but diametrically opposed it with a legal detail concerning French cultural property and heritage. It is in this light that when the Ougadougou speech was made eleven months after acquiescing to restitution, the question of sincerity comes to the fore. This again is more serious when after the 2017 speech stakeholders in France still viewed the work of restitution and especially the work of Sarr and Savoy as a ' mission impossible'. Oswald Homéchy, Minister of Culture and Sports in Benin also confided to the commissioned reporters in April 2018 that " if one day France truly restituted Africa's cultural heritage items back to Africa, it would be akin to the fall of the Berlin wall or the reunification of North and South Korea" (Sarr and Savoy 2018). Was the French president sincere? Will he sincerely follow up the return of African works of artistic brilliance? It is possible that France will influence other members of the European Union to respond positively to the call to restitute illegally acquired African objects? Note again that forty organizations from the German African diaspora congregated in requesting the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel for some sort of reaction or response to the 'historical initiative put forth by the French President' and got no response (Sarr and Savoy) 2018, 15). In London, the Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum in April 2018 reflected and submitted to the view that, the speediest way, if Ethiopia wanted to have her items that were

pillaged and plundered on display, is 'a long-term loan … that would be the easiest way to manage it (Sarr and Savoy 2018, 16). So, instead of definitive restitution of what rightfully belong to Africa, cooperation, circulations and long term loans seems to be the popular European version of restitution. But this is comical and derisory. How can what was looted, pillaged, plundered from Africa with attendant odd effects on African lives and lodged in Europe for generations be returned conditionally? How can African stolen goods be loaned back to them even if it is long termed? How can one possessing looted items chose to return them by insisting that the veritable owner holds and use them for a while and then return again to the one who wrested them? Sincerity demands that the return of African arts should not be hypothecated. This position disguises the liability of western holders of African cultural objects and delineates the same as friends that should be collaborated with without any demur. But the history of African relations with the West from slavery to globalization is already replete with grim examples attesting to the fact that the proverbial leopard will never change its spots. This data is common place.

It is feasible to believe that the Ouagadougou speech that elicited the Sarr and Savoy report on restitution was a hoodwink. By 2017, African public opinion about French policies in Africa was increasingly negative and many viewed her presence as a form of neo-colonialism. France's maintenance of the CFA franc, a currency used by many west African countries was seen as a tool of economic control. Africanist critics argued that the central European Bank's control over the currency's monetary policy undermined African nations' economic sovereignty (Chaffer 2022). Again, France's militaty intervention and presence in the Sahel region with the aim of countering terrorism was greeted with skepticism. In 2013, France launched operation Serval in Mali, which aimed at sending out Islamist extremists who had seized control of the north. The operations were extended to other Sahelian states and it became Operation Barkhane in 2014. Despite initial successes the operations were criticized for their limited impact and unintended consequences such as exacerbating instability and creating resentment among indigenous populations. Many Africans felt that France's intention was focused more on protecting its own interests than addressing the root causes of instability in Africa especially in the Sahel zone. Specifically, in January 2017 demonstrators in Bamako, Mali called on all French troops to leave the country for her military presence like in other Sahelian states was considered as an affront on national sovereignty. (Resa, 2020) By October 2017, protests were also held in Kidal, Mali against the French 'Barkhane' operation. This protest was reportedly peaceful, but the commanding officer of 'Operation Barkhane referred to them as unacceptable. (Civicus Monitor, 2017)

It is possible that against the wanning pride of France in Africa especially with the open protest against French neocolonialism in the Sahel, France wanted to clear her name. she was aware of this decline and this was reinforced by Jean-Yves Le Drian, French Foreign minister when he noted that 'the authorities of

the countries in the Sahel should not stay in the comfort zone of thinking that Barkhane (French forces) is behind them.' The forces were already moving out of the zone as French interest was also in extremis. The speech in Ouagadougou University Amphitheatre could have been an attempt by the president at re-imaging France in the region and possibly divert public opinion from debates over failed security and economic policies. The Africans in the Sahel zone in retrospect refused to turn especially as Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso eighty-sixth French forces from their territories between 2022 and 2024.

Against this context, the Sarr and Savoy guided report can be viewed as part of the process of moralizing French relations with the African states that was already on the wane. The report acknowledges the historical crimes committed against Africa at colonialism and in an empirical manner, demonstrate the value of these objects to African history and collective memory and that Africa has a right to her illegally looted heritage housed in Western museums. African request for the return of these works of art have been aptly articulated in relation to western rebuffs against such demands. In fact, they have noted that in all of Europe, the mere word 'restitution' elicits a defensive reflex and a gesture of retreat (Sarr and Savoy 2018, 16). But to ensure the restitution of looted African Heritage, they proposed a new relational ethnics in which the argument that the act and restitution implies that cultural heritage objects retain their legitimate life within their originary geo-cultural environments-and equating this with the idea that the cultural objects must therefore remain at their originary home is not acceptable(Sarr and Savoy 2018, 39). This in the reporters view, would lead into an impasse in the long and rich history of Museum cooperation between Europe and Africa and shared circulation of arts works and collections. In this novel logic, the circulation of African works of artistic brilliance and collections must not be permanently restored to Africa for it will not be the proper compensation neither does reclaiming financial compensation is proper. Compensation to the despoiled Africans should consist in 'offering to repair the relation' without the objects that will now become carriers of new meaning-'Semiophores'(Sarr and Savoy 2018, 40).

Ostensibly, the new ethics fears the pain the return of the objects will bring upon Africans hence, their preservation in Europe will permit Africans the opportunity to refuse their recognition and working through painful memories inflicted by colonial rule. The zenith of this moralization is the submission that the new relationship will be enhanced through

An auto-soteriological process, taking the form of self-reparations, through a work on one's own history should take place by endogenizing the latter and by emancipating oneself from the acts and speech of the other'(Sarr and Savoy 2018, 41).

Laconically, the authors of this report recognize inflicted prejudice upon the African but since it is not a proper compensation to repatriate African works, the African needs self-salvation. She needs to work on the history that was responsible for her prejudiced status and free herself from the acts and speech of the

other [colonialists]. Once this is done, they can now relate well with the looters of their arts works. The pillagers and plunderers understandably become free of all quilt and responsibility and since the African must have done 'self-reparations' the enemy becomes a friend and relations assumes normalcy. It is absurd to think so. This thread of reasoning absolves the west of responsibility and positions them in their cherished yet erroneous position of dictating the pace of historical dialogues and charting the course of things. It exonerates the west of all ignobleness towards Africa from the slave trade era across time to the colonial and post-colonial periods. If this restitution debate be thus, and is expected to open "one chapter in a much larger and certainly much vaster history', then the debate on another chapter of western indignities to Africa will also help to open up yet another one then the restitution debate will be protracted and finally end up exculpating the west of the gamut of historical and institutional crimes against Africa since the era of European Slave trade in Africa.

In cases of definitive restitution, the proposed process again evinces parochialism and elitism. The African needs to make the request for the items to the "public owner" to whom belongs the final and formal decision of restitution", when questions related to the provenance of the object have been established and made known and the defect of consent during acquisition strongly presumed. In spite of the fact that the west has acknowledged their crimes and as a result should lead the process, the report intimates that:

The restitution is undertaken on the basis of a formal demand from the country making the request which could swiftly receive the cultural objects whose origin and conditions of acquisition are sufficiently known so that the establishment of an investigation file does not require further research (Sarr and Savoy 2018, 79)

This presupposes that without any formal African request, restitution cannot be engaged but if the cultural cooperation between France and the requesting country is established, there would be need to complete the inventorying of cultural objects originating from the "contracting African countries" for it is the list or inventoried objects established within the framework of the agreement that constitutes the "foundation of the request for restitution". Thereafter, the inventory of African objects in museums is made accessible, then partnerships between experts, researchers, or curators from Africa and museums concerned are put in place in a bid to establish the provenance of the objects (Sarr and Savoy 2018, 80). Besides the time and constraints that will punctuate this process, one wonders why Africa should shoulder the burden of restitution. Why must she request for what was wrested from her when the illegal guardian of her valued goods know them already? It is indeed condescending and lacking in basic logic that the victim pays the price for his victimization even when the abuser has accepted responsibility and confessed. Victor

Ehikhamenor, a Nigerian visual artist, writer and photographer cited by Ngozi Adichie during the Humboldt forum indeed captures the way restitution should be done in a simple satire;

If I come and steal your *rapa* [piece of cloth] and say I won' give you back your *rapa* because you will not tie it properly around your waist or you will not wash it well and so the colour will fade or this or that all are irrelevant. The *rapa* is mine and I can do with it what I will. Give me back my *rapa* because it's mine"

African arts belong to Africa, the West should return them and whatever happens to them is not their business. Their responsibility is to return them. The paternalistic demeanor of the Sarr and Savoy report informs the elitist slant of their approach. To enhance restitution, partnerships are to be set-up with experts, researchers or curators from African countries of concerned nations. The joint commission of experts are then charged with evaluation and investigation of files of objects submitted for restitution). This is understandable because within the context of their mission concerning restitution, only archives in public museums or affiliated establishments were considered. (Sarr and Savoy 2018, 79) It is instructive to note that most of the art works now lodged in western institutions were produced by the African masses but Public debates on the subject matter have marginalized or silenced the perspective of African experts while the views of African subaltern and the recipient communities have not been aptly blueprinted (Apoh and Mehler 2020, 13). This neglect is comprehensible. It stems from the reasoning that the objects will have to move from one museum in Europe to the other (in Africa). This logic negates the fact that the objects now confined in European museums were forcefully and illegally wrested from African private homes, palaces, shrines, archaeological sites, workshops etc. the museum to museum cooperation in the context of the restitution will deny the original owners or African communities the right and access to what is legitimately theirs.

It is therefore our submission that western dilly-dallying with the issue of restitution with the supposed excuse that the treasures are better protected in Europe, they are seen by more persons in Europe than if they were returned to Africa; manuscripts are too old to travel, African museums lack security and the environmental conditions found in Europe's museums, scholars still need to work on them etc., is a mere distraction intended to prolong the process and engaged Africans in such narrow discourse while western excesses drive farther and vaster in other departments of African life. To discuss restitution of African cultural heritage apart from the entire edifice of western crimes against Africans is nothing short of parochialism and divarication. The rape of African natural resources and cultural wealth or the economic exploitation, distortion of African political systems, assault on her cultural mores, arrest and distortions of her educational growth path and the psychological mayhem engendered was whole and inseparable. To therefore discuss restitution piecemeal is a polite denial of the indignities inflicted on Africa since the era

of the western slave trade in Africa. Africa does not need to beg or request for restitution, she deserves it as a judicial right and this restitution should be total. Ngugi has also noted that in the eighteenth and 19th centuries, Europe stole art treasures from Africa to decorate their houses and museums. In the twentieth century, 'Europe is stealing the treasures of the mind to enrich their languages and cultures. Africa needs back its economy, its politics, its culture, its languages and all its patriotic writers'. (Wa Thiongo 2011, XII). It is because the historical indignities against Africa by the West were and are total that restitution approach should necessarily be total

The Cruciality of Total Restitution and Restoration

The Indignities of the European Slave Trade in Africa were total

The European slave trade devastated the economic fabric of many African societies, leading to long-term underdevelopment, resource depletion, and disrupted economic systems. Prior to the onset of the transatlantic slave trade, many African societies thrived through sophisticated agricultural, craft, and trade systems. However, the trade in human beings caused a significant reorientation of economic priorities, often to the detriment of sustainable development. For instance, the demand for slaves incentivized raiding and warfare, which destabilized many regions, as evidenced by the increase in warfare in West Africa during the 17th and 18th centuries (Lovejoy, 2000). The economic focus shifted from production for local consumption and trade to capturing and exporting human capital, which resulted in the destruction of productive agricultural land and traditional industries. The trans-Atlantic slave trade led to the systematic extraction of resources, with European traders and slave traders profiting immensely while African societies experienced a drain of human resources, which hampered their economic growth.

Furthermore, the loss of able-bodied individuals, especially men and women of working age, caused a demographic shift that stunted economic productivity. For example, the forced removal of millions of Africans estimates suggest approximately 12 million Africans were forcibly taken, created labor shortages that hindered the development of local economies (Eltis & Richardson, 2010). Many coastal societies, such as the Asante Empire and the Kingdom of Dahomey, became dependent on the slave trade for their wealth, which created a cycle of economic dependency on external markets and hindered diversification. The long-term consequences include underinvestment in local infrastructure and education, making post-colonial economic recovery more difficult. The extraction of resources for European markets, without reinvestment into local economies, contributed to a pattern of underdevelopment that persists in some regions today (Amin, 2010).

The political landscape of many African societies was profoundly altered by the slave trade. The demand for slaves incentivized warfare, conquest, and political instability, as states and leaders competed to

supply captives to European traders. This period saw the rise of powerful states like Dahomey and Oyo, which engaged in frequent warfare to capture slaves, leading to widespread violence and destabilization. According to Lovejoy (2000), the proliferation of warfare was driven by economic motives, with states mobilizing armies to raid neighboring communities, often with devastating effects on social cohesion. This militarization of societies resulted in centralized authorities that were more focused on warfare and capturing slaves than on governance or development.

Additionally, the slave trade shifted political power dynamics, often marginalizing traditional rulers who resisted involvement or who opposed the sale of their people. Conversely, some rulers capitalized on the trade to strengthen their authority, leading to internal conflicts and regional fragmentation. The increased militarization and internal strife contributed to political fragility, making societies more susceptible to external colonization in the 19th century. The colonial powers later exploited these divisions to establish control, but the long-term destabilization caused by the slave trade left many African states weakened and divided (Lovejoy, 2000).

Moreover, the loss of large segments of the population and the destruction of social structures had lasting effects on state-building efforts. The disruption of traditional political institutions, coupled with the violence associated with the trade, created power vacuums that fostered lawlessness and internal conflict. The legacy of these destabilizing effects is still evident today in ongoing conflicts, weak governance, and fragmented states in regions that were heavily involved in the slave trade (Rodney, 1972).

The social fabric of African societies was deeply fractured by the European slave trade. Communities that once coexisted peacefully were torn apart through raiding and warfare, resulting in social dislocation and loss of social cohesion. The forced removal of millions of individuals not only caused demographic shifts but also led to the erosion of traditional kinship networks and social institutions. For example, in the Bight of Benin and West Africa, the sale of human beings created a climate of suspicion, fear, and social fragmentation, as communities became more insular and distrustful of outsiders (Lovejoy, 2000). The social hierarchy was also fundamentally altered. Societies that once valued communal sharing and kinship bonds experienced a decline in social capital as the focus shifted toward capturing and selling slaves. Gender roles were also affected, as the trade often involved the abduction and exploitation of women, leading to increased violence against women and the breakdown of family structures. The social dislocation caused by the trade contributed to increased poverty, social inequality, and marginalization of certain groups, effects that are still visible in contemporary African social structures.

Furthermore, the social trauma inflicted by the trade such as; the forced severance of familial ties and the violence associated with slave raids left deep psychological scars. Oral histories and ethnographic studies reveal persistent collective memories of trauma, which have been transmitted across generations,

contributing to a collective sense of loss and victimization (Nunn, 2008). These social effects have impeded social cohesion and reconciliation efforts in post-colonial Africa, perpetuating cycles of conflict and marginalization.

The European slave trade inflicted profound cultural damage, leading to the loss of cultural identities, traditions, and practices. The kidnapping of individuals often meant the dislocation of cultural custodians and the disruption of traditional cultural transmission. Many communities experienced the loss of their elders and cultural leaders, whose knowledge and customs were carried away or lost during the chaos of raids. This cultural dislocation weakened indigenous practices and made societies more vulnerable to European influence and colonization. The trade also facilitated the spread of European cultural elements into Africa, often at the expense of indigenous traditions. Christianity and Western education systems were introduced aggressively, sometimes displacing local belief systems and languages. For example, in West Africa, the increased presence of Christian missionaries during and after the slave trade era led to the decline of traditional African religions, which were often suppressed or marginalized (Mbembe, 2017). This cultural imperialism contributed to a loss of cultural sovereignty and identity, effects that are still evident today in the dominance of Western cultural paradigms.

Moreover, the forced migration of Africans resulted in the spread of African cultural elements to the Americas and the Caribbean, where they evolved into new cultural forms such as Afro-Caribbean religions, music, and dance. While these cultural exchanges enriched global cultural diversity, they were also a tragic consequence of the violence and trauma inflicted on African societies. The loss of cultural artifacts, oral histories, and traditional knowledge due to the slave trade represents a significant cultural impoverishment, with ongoing efforts now aimed at cultural revival and restitution (Matory, 2017).

The psychological effects of the European slave trade on Africans are profound and enduring. The trauma of kidnapping, violence, and forced displacement has left deep psychological scars that continue to influence individual and collective mental health. Many victims endured brutal conditions, physical abuse, and dehumanization, experiences that have been transmitted across generations through oral history and cultural memory. The collective trauma has contributed to a pervasive sense of loss, helplessness, and victimization within African communities. Research indicates that trauma resulting from slavery and violence can manifest in various psychological issues, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The disruption of social and family structures, coupled with the brutal experiences of capture and transport, created a climate of fear and despair. For example, studies of oral histories among African descendants in the Caribbean reveal ongoing psychological distress rooted in ancestral trauma (Nunn, 2008). The legacy of this trauma is often linked to social issues such as substance abuse, violence, and social dislocation.

Furthermore, the internalization of victimization has contributed to feelings of collective inferiority and marginalization, which continue to influence perceptions of self-worth among African and African-descended populations. Efforts to address these psychological scars include initiatives for cultural revival, community healing, and acknowledgment of historical injustices. Recognizing and healing the psychological wounds caused by the slave trade is an ongoing challenge, yet it is crucial for fostering resilience and reconciliation in post-colonial African societies.

Effects of European Colonialism and Neo-Colonialism in Africa were total

European colonialism and neo-colonialism have had profound and enduring negative impacts on Africa's economic development. Colonial powers structured African economies primarily to serve European interests, leading to the extraction of raw materials, the suppression of local industries, and the creation of economies heavily dependent on resource exports—patterns that persist today. For example, in French West Africa, the colonial administration established a plantation economy centered on commodities like cocoa, coffee, and peanuts, which were exported to Europe with minimal benefit to local populations (Amin, 1972). This created a mono-economy vulnerable to global price fluctuations, as seen in Côte d'Ivoire, where dependence on cocoa exports has led to economic instability and underdevelopment of local manufacturing sectors (Tchamyou, 2020).

Similarly, in British East Africa (now Kenya and Uganda), colonial policies prioritized the development of cash crop agriculture, such as tea and coffee, often at the expense of local food production. The land alienation policies displaced indigenous farmers, forcing them into wage labor or subsistence farming, which perpetuated poverty (Okoth-Ogendo, 2005). The colonial economy was also characterized by infrastructural investments that favored extractive activities, such as railways to facilitate resource export, rather than fostering diversified economic development. Post-independence, many African economies remained dependent on the export of primary commodities, making them susceptible to global market shocks. For example, the fall in global coffee prices in the 1980s devastated economies like Ethiopia and Kenya, leading to increased poverty and economic stagnation (World Bank, 1989).

Portuguese Africa (Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau) exemplifies colonial extraction's devastating effects, where colonial administrations focused on resource extraction; diamonds, oil and minerals, without developing local industries or infrastructure for local benefit (Alves & Faria, 2020). This left post-independence economies fragile, heavily dependent on resource exports, with limited diversification. The legacy persists, with Angola's economy heavily reliant on oil exports, accounting for over 90% of revenue, making it vulnerable to oil price fluctuations (OECD, 2021). Moreover, the colonial emphasis on resource extraction and neglect of social development created deep inequalities, with wealth concentrated among a small elite connected to colonial structures, exacerbating poverty and economic disparity.

Neo-colonialism perpetuates these economic disadvantages through global financial systems, multinational corporations, and international trade policies that continue to prioritize resource extraction over sustainable development. Structural adjustment programs (SAPs) imposed by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank in the 1980s and 1990s further impoverished many African nations by reducing social spending, privatizing state enterprises, and opening markets to foreign investment often to the benefit of foreign corporations rather than local populations (Mkandawire, 2005). For instance, in Zimbabwe, SAPs led to a decline in agriculture, industry, and social services, contributing to economic decline and social destabilization (Mlambo, 2008).

Therefore, olonialism laid the foundation for an economic structure that prioritized resource extraction, export dependence, and inequality, effects that continue to hinder Africa's sustainable development. Contemporary neo-colonial practices, characterized by economic dependency, debt, and structural adjustment policies, have deepened these historical wounds, preventing equitable growth and development.

European colonialism fundamentally reshaped Africa's political landscape, often establishing artificial borders and centralized authorities that disregarded indigenous governance systems. The colonial legacy fostered political instability, authoritarianism, and weak state institutions across the continent. For instance, in French West Africa, colonial policies created a centralized administrative system that marginalized traditional leaders and imposed European-style governance structures, which often failed to resonate with local communities (Fanon, 1963). Post-independence, countries like Côte d'Ivoire and Mali experienced coups, civil wars, and authoritarian regimes, reflecting the destabilizing impact of colonial rule.

In British East Africa, colonial administrators governed through indirect rule, empowering a small elite aligned with colonial interests while marginalizing traditional leaders and local political organizations (Ochieng, 1995). When independence was achieved, this legacy contributed to political fragmentation and struggles for power, exemplified by Kenya's post-independence violence and authoritarian tendencies under leaders like Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel arap Moi (Kamau, 2002). Similarly, in Portuguese Africa, decades of colonial repression and lack of political development left post-independence states like Angola and Mozambique vulnerable to civil wars fueled by rival factions, foreign interventions, and weak state institutions (Clapham, 1996).

The arbitrary borders drawn by colonial powers ignored ethnic, linguistic, and cultural realities, leading to ongoing conflicts and state fragility. The Rwandan Genocide of 1994 exemplifies the catastrophic consequences of colonial-induced ethnic divisions, which were exacerbated by colonial policies favoring certain groups over others (Mamdani, 2001). Many post-independence African states have struggled with

authoritarian rule, corruption, and weak institutions, often justified by the need for stability after colonial upheavals. For example, in Central African Republic and Burundi, colonial legacies of division and marginalization have perpetuated cycles of violence and weak governance (Richards, 2014).

Neo-colonialism continues to influence Africa's political landscape through external interference, economic dependency, and the influence of international institutions. Foreign powers often support authoritarian regimes that serve their strategic interests, undermining genuine democratic development. For example, France's continued military presence and political influence in Francophone Africa, under the guise of maintaining stability, often perpetuate authoritarianism and limit genuine sovereignty (Mamdani, 2012). Similarly, external financial institutions' conditionalities have constrained political autonomy, forcing governments to adopt policies that prioritize debt repayment and foreign investment over national development and democratic governance. Overall, colonialism and neo-colonialism have entrenched political instability, weak state institutions, and divisions rooted in colonial border-making and governance practices. These legacies continue to undermine efforts towards democratization, stability, and effective governance across Africa.

Colonialism inflicted profound social disruptions across Africa, undermining indigenous social structures, cultures, and identities. The colonial project often sought to impose European social norms, erase indigenous customs, and create divisions based on race, ethnicity, and class. In French West Africa, colonial policies promoted a racial hierarchy that privileged settlers and Europeans while marginalizing indigenous populations, fostering social stratification and resentment (Fanon, 1963). The colonial administration's emphasis on assimilation policies aimed at erasing local cultures and replacing them with European values, resulting in a loss of cultural identity and social cohesion.

In British East Africa, colonial policies enforced land alienation and racial segregation, exemplified by the establishment of European settler colonies that displaced indigenous communities and created social inequalities. The displacement of Kikuyu farmers in Kenya during the Mau Mau uprising, for instance, exemplifies the social trauma caused by land dispossession and racial discrimination (Ochieng, 1995). Colonial education systems often prioritized Western knowledge, marginalizing indigenous languages and traditions, which contributed to a loss of cultural identity and social cohesion among Africans.

Portuguese colonies like Mozambique and Angola experienced brutal social repression, with colonial authorities suppressing local cultures and enforcing policies of forced labor and social control. The violent suppression of uprisings and the exploitation of indigenous populations during the colonial period left deep scars, fostering social divisions and distrust (Clapham, 1996). Post-independence, many African societies continue to grapple with these social cleavages, which are exploited by political elites to maintain control, leading to ethnic conflicts and social fragmentation.

Neo-colonialism perpetuates these social issues through continued cultural domination, economic marginalization, and political interference. Western media, educational curricula, and cultural exports often reinforce stereotypes and diminish local identities. In many African countries, urbanization driven by neo-colonial economic policies has led to social dislocation, increased poverty, and the erosion of traditional social networks. For example, in Nigeria, the rapid urbanization and exposure to Western lifestyles have created social tensions between traditional communities and modern urban elites, exacerbating inequality and social unrest (Adebanwi & Obadare, 2010).

The social impact of colonialism and neo-colonialism also manifests in health disparities, education gaps, and gender inequalities. Colonial health policies often neglected rural populations, leading to persistent underdevelopment of healthcare infrastructure. The legacy of these disparities persists today, with health indicators such as maternal mortality rates and life expectancy lagging behind global averages. Similarly, colonial education systems largely excluded girls and marginalized rural populations, a trend that continues to hinder social mobility and gender equality across the continent (Nunn & Wantchekon, 2011). Colonial and neo-colonial social policies therefore disrupted indigenous social fabrics, fostered inequalities, and suppressed cultural identities. These legacies continue to influence social cohesion, development, and identity in Africa, often perpetuating cycles of poverty, conflict, and social exclusion.

The psychological scars of colonialism and neo-colonialism in Africa are profound and multifaceted. Colonial rule often involved violent repression, cultural denigration, and systemic discrimination, leading to long-lasting trauma among African populations. The process of colonization, which aimed to impose European superiority, fostered feelings of inferiority, alienation, and cultural loss among Africans. Frantz Fanon (1963) vividly described the psychological damage inflicted by colonial violence, emphasizing that colonized peoples internalize their subjugation, which manifests as low self-esteem, identity crises, and a sense of alienation from their cultural roots.

In French Africa, colonial education policies aimed at producing a class of Africans who would serve as intermediaries but often at the expense of their cultural identity. This created a psychological dissonance, where Africans felt caught between their traditional cultures and the imposed Western ideals, leading to a loss of self-worth and cultural confidence (Fanon, 1963). The legacy of such policies contributes to contemporary issues of identity among African youth, who grapple with the effects of cultural erosion and the persistent influence of Western media and values.

In British colonies like Kenya and Nigeria, racial discrimination and social exclusion fostered a sense of inferiority and victimization among Africans. The Mau Mau uprising and subsequent independence movements were driven partly by psychological resistance to colonial subjugation. Post-independence, many Africans continued to suffer from internalized colonial stereotypes that hindered self-esteem and

social progress (Nkrumah, 1964). The psychological trauma of violent repression, forced labor, and displacement leaves scars that influence individual and collective identities, often manifesting in mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Portuguese Africa, with its brutal suppression of uprisings and forced labor regimes, inflicted severe psychological trauma on indigenous populations. The brutal repression during the struggle for independence, including massacres and torture, has left enduring psychological wounds. The long-term effects of such violence continue to affect post-independence societies, where trauma is compounded by ongoing economic hardship and political instability (Alves & Faria, 2020).

Neo-colonial psychological effects manifest through persistent feelings of dependency, cultural inferiority, and a lack of confidence in indigenous institutions. The dominance of Western narratives in education, media, and cultural exports reinforces a perception of African inferiority and dependence. This psychological dependency hampers efforts towards genuine self-determination and nation-building. For example, the pervasive influence of Western media on African youth often promotes Western beauty standards, values, and consumerist lifestyles, leading to a decline in traditional cultural pride and self-esteem (Nunn & Wantchekon, 2011).

Furthermore, the psychological effects extend to the internalization of colonial stereotypes, which influence social interactions, leadership perceptions, and cultural expression. The persistent belief that Western ways are superior continues to undermine indigenous knowledge systems and social cohesion. Addressing these psychological scars requires deliberate efforts at cultural revival, education reform, and psychological healing, recognizing that the legacy of colonial trauma is embedded in individual and collective consciousness.

Globalisation outcomes were total

European globalization, particularly through the transatlantic slave trade and colonial economic policies, has had profound and enduring negative impacts on Africa's economic development. The exploitation of African resources and labor during the slave trade, which lasted from the 15th to the 19th century, disrupted indigenous economic systems and led to the systematic depletion of human and material resources (Eltis & Richardson, 2010). For example, in French West Africa, colonies like Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire were integrated into the colonial economy primarily as suppliers of raw materials such as peanuts, cotton, and ivory, which were exported to Europe with minimal benefit to local populations. This extractive economic model created a pattern of economic dependence on foreign markets and hindered the development of diversified local industries. The colonial imposition of monoculture economies meant that African economies were oriented towards export of raw materials, making them vulnerable to global

price fluctuations and limiting industrial growth. For instance, the colonial administration in Portuguese Angola prioritized the export of coffee and diamonds, which resulted in a fragile economic structure heavily reliant on commodity exports, with little investment in local infrastructure or technological development (Birmingham, 1995).

Furthermore, colonial borders and policies deliberately marginalized indigenous economic practices, replacing them with export-driven systems that favored European interests. This economic disenfranchisement persisted post-independence, as many African nations inherited economies that were unbalanced and dependent on former colonial powers. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD, 2018), African countries still struggle with debt dependency, limited industrial capacity, and inadequate infrastructure, all legacies of colonial economic policies. The long-term consequence is that African economies remain among the least diversified and most vulnerable in the world, with persistent poverty and inequality. The economic damage inflicted during the colonial period, therefore, has had lasting effects that continue to impede Africa's path toward sustainable development, illustrating how European globalization systematically undermined Africa's economic sovereignty and self-sufficiency.

European globalization introduced political structures that significantly destabilized traditional African governance systems and imposed artificial borders that continue to fuel conflict. During the colonial era, European powers such as Britain, France, and Portugal established colonial administrations that prioritized control and extraction over the development of coherent political institutions. In French West Africa, for example, policies of direct rule undermined indigenous political structures, replacing them with centralized colonial administrations that marginalized local leaders (Mamdani, 1996). After independence, many African nations inherited these artificial borders, which ignored ethnic, linguistic, and cultural divisions, resulting in enduring political instability. Nigeria, a former British colony, exemplifies this, where colonial borders grouped diverse ethnic groups such as the Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo into a single state, leading to recurrent conflicts, military coups, and civil war, notably the Biafran War (1967–1970) (Falola & Heaton, 2008).

European colonial powers often manipulated local power dynamics to serve their interests, fostering authoritarian regimes and suppressing democratic institutions. In Portuguese Angola, for instance, the colonial government maintained a repressive political environment that delayed the development of political institutions and fostered resistance movements such as MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA, which fought for independence and subsequently plunged the nation into a prolonged civil war. This legacy of political instability has persisted into the post-independence era, with many African countries experiencing coups, authoritarian rule, and weak state institutions (Clapham, 1996). European

interference also created a political landscape characterized by clientelism and corruption, which continue to hinder governance reforms. The legacy of colonial borders and governance structures has contributed directly to ongoing conflicts, weak states, and fragile democracies across Africa, illustrating how European globalization not only disrupted traditional political systems but also laid the groundwork for persistent political instability.

The social fabric of Africa was profoundly altered by European globalization through the transatlantic slave trade and colonial policies. The slave trade resulted in the forced displacement of millions of Africans, fragmenting communities and destroying social cohesion. In West Africa, for example, the trans-Saharan and Atlantic slave trades dismantled existing social hierarchies and kinship networks, creating a legacy of social dislocation that persisted long after abolition (Lovejoy, 2000). Entire societies were destabilized as populations were decimated, and social structures were upended, leading to long-term demographic and social consequences.

Colonial policies further exacerbated social divisions by imposing European cultural norms, languages, and education systems that marginalized indigenous traditions and knowledge. In French West Africa, the colonial administration promoted the French language and Western education, often at the expense of local languages and cultural practices. This created a cultural hierarchy that positioned European culture as superior, leading to identity crises and loss of indigenous cultural practices (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). The social stratification reinforced by colonial racial policies, especially in Portuguese Africa, where racial segregation was institutionalized, has had enduring effects on social cohesion. In Angola, for instance, the colonial regime established racial hierarchies that privileged white settlers and marginalized indigenous populations, a legacy that contributed to social inequalities and tensions post-independence (Birmingham, 1995).

The disruption of social cohesion and indigenous identities has contributed to ongoing social unrest, ethnic conflicts, and disparities. African societies continue to grapple with the consequences of these colonial policies, which created social divisions based on ethnicity, race, and class. The social fabric was further eroded by the introduction of Western notions of individualism and capitalism, often undermining communal values that traditionally prioritized collective well-being. The legacy of social fragmentation manifests today in issues such as ethnic conflicts, inequality, and social exclusion, demonstrating how European globalization deeply compromised the social cohesion of African societies.

European globalization profoundly impacted African cultures by eroding indigenous traditions, beliefs, and social systems through colonial domination. The transatlantic slave trade and subsequent colonial policies aimed to reshape African identities by imposing European languages, religions, and cultural norms, often dismissing or suppressing local practices. In French West Africa, colonial authorities

promoted the French language and Christianity, which displaced many indigenous religious and cultural practices. The Christianization campaigns, for example, led to the decline of traditional spiritual systems, such as the Yoruba Orisha worship or the Akan spiritual practices, often demonized as pagan or superstitious (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013).

The colonial education system further accelerated cultural erosion by prioritizing European curricula and marginalizing indigenous knowledge systems. This created a cultural dichotomy where Western cultural values were regarded as superior, fostering a sense of cultural inferiority among Africans. In Portuguese Africa, colonial authorities sought to erase or diminish local languages and customs, promoting Portuguese culture as the standard of civilization (Birmingham, 1995). This cultural imperialism resulted in the loss of indigenous languages, arts, and social practices, many of which are now endangered or extinct.

The colonial legacy also imposed Western notions of modernization that often conflicted with indigenous worldviews. The introduction of Western legal systems, dress codes, and social hierarchies reconfigured African societies, leading to a diminished sense of cultural identity. Post-independence, many African nations have struggled with reconciling their traditional cultures with the lingering influence of colonial cultural dominance. The enduring effects include a diminished sense of cultural pride, loss of linguistic diversity, and the marginalization of indigenous knowledge systems, which continue to affect identity formation and cultural resilience across Africa.

The psychological impact of European globalization particularly through slavery and colonialism has been profound and enduring. The dehumanization, violence, and cultural suppression inflicted upon Africans have left deep psychological scars that continue to influence individual and collective identities. The transatlantic slave trade, which forcibly removed millions of Africans from their homelands, created a legacy of trauma, loss, and psychological dislocation. Studies indicate that descendants of enslaved Africans often experience collective trauma, manifesting as feelings of inferiority, disconnection from cultural roots, and ongoing identity crises (Williams, 2012). The disruption of social and familial networks during slavery has been linked to intergenerational trauma, which affects mental health and social cohesion today.

Colonial policies further inflicted psychological damage by instilling a sense of cultural inferiority. The colonial education system, which promoted Western superiority and denigrated indigenous cultures, contributed to a form of cultural alienation. Many Africans internalized the colonial narrative that their cultures and histories were inferior, leading to self-doubt and diminished cultural pride (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). This internalized colonization has persisted, with some African elites adopting Western values at

the expense of indigenous identities, creating a psychological divide between traditional and modern identities.

The pervasive influence of Western media, education, and consumer culture continues to reinforce feelings of cultural inadequacy and dependency. Psychological studies have shown that such persistent feelings of inferiority hinder African individuals' self-esteem and socio-cultural development (Williams, 2012). Moreover, the trauma associated with violence, exploitation, and marginalization during colonialism has contributed to a mental health crisis in many African countries, with high rates of depression, anxiety, and trauma-related disorders. The enduring psychological scars underscore how European globalization has not only disrupted material and social dimensions but also inflicted deep wounds on the collective psyche of African peoples, affecting their sense of self, agency, and cultural integrity.

Data availability
No datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study.

Declarations
Ethics approval and consent to participate
The author(s) declare that it is not applicable.

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