

Navigating Change: From Colonial to Contemporary Africa

Host:

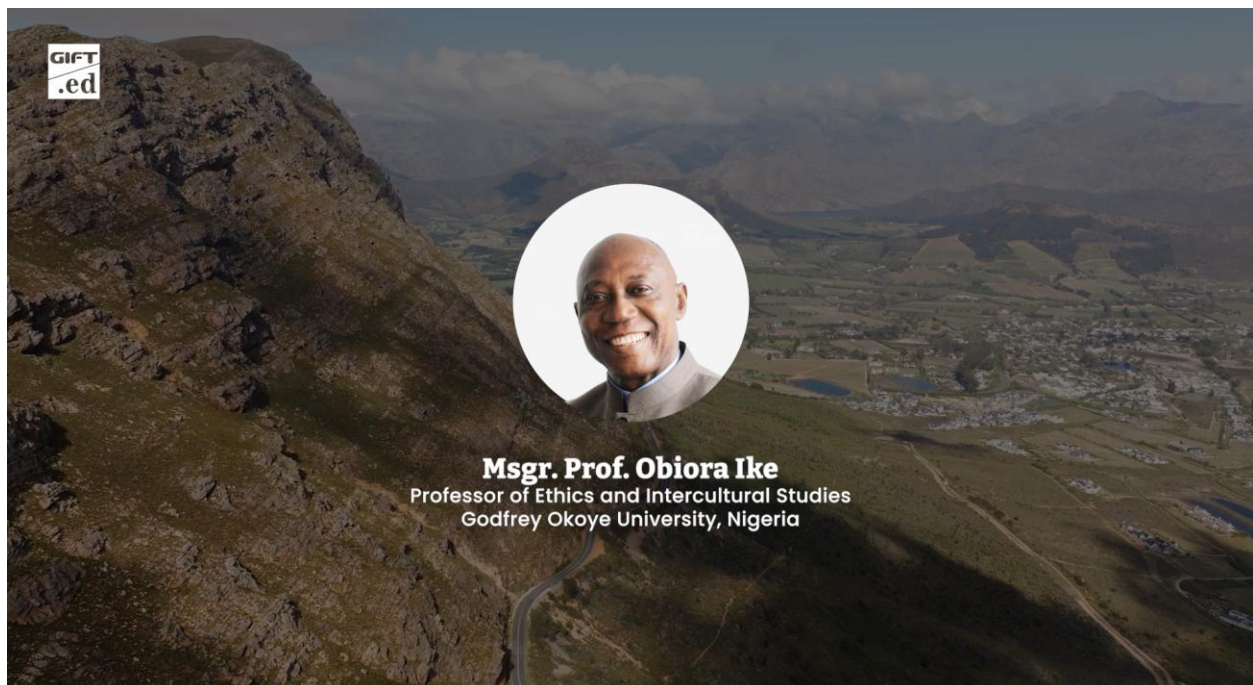
It is a commonly held belief that the rules-based world order, which arose in the 20th century, was designed to help balance the global scales of power, creating a level playing field for all nations.

However, it is being increasingly recognised that this has not been the case for many countries, particularly those formerly colonised by Western nations.

And nowhere is this disparity more apparent than in Africa.

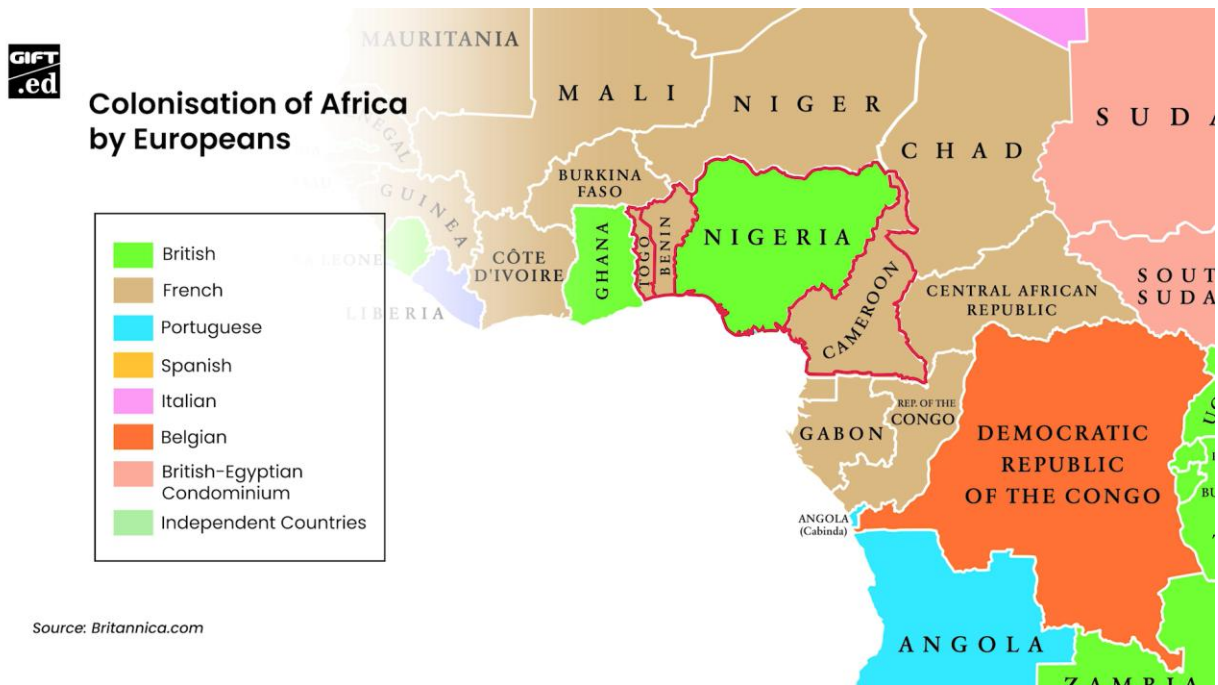
To help unpack these far-reaching impacts, we're joined by Professor Obiora Ike. Professor Ike is a world leader in the field of ethics. He is a Professor of Ethics and Intercultural Studies at the Godfrey Okoye University in Enugu State, Nigeria, and a Founding Director of the Catholic Institute of Development, Justice, Peace and Caritas.

He'll share how many of the structural challenges faced by African nations arise from the legacy of colonialism and contemporary stereotypes.



Professor Obiora Ike:

There has been an intrusion on the African continent, and this intrusion is the reason for the stereotypes we hear about. You talk about slavery, you talk about colonialism, you talk about neo-colonialism, you talk about a globalisation that creates a globe and puts every other person outside. You can only jump in through the window because the door is closed.



If you come to a country, let me say a country like Nigeria, and you remove Cameroon, remove Togo, which are part of Nigeria, and put them away. Remove Benin Republic and create other republics there. You have divided the people because the boundaries have been just arbitrarily made. Then they start living in environments where they have to say, do I know you? Are with the same tribe? How come that we are together under one country, under one sovereignty? They have to start now discussing this. So by that you have divided their people and now you stereotype them for fighting within, for what you caused.

The African peoples must also know that they have a responsibility to themselves. Unfortunately, when we have to do our local elections and we have to find who will be a President in Ivory Coast, the French government has to impose an African candidate. When you have to do an election or find a job for someone on top positions, internationals now try to impose a candidate of their choice over their own people. So the originality of your own voice is undermined.

Your own people imagine to talk the truth to power and to speak for your own interests and to protect the integrity of the people, of the African peoples, of the interests of the Africans within the international community. They do not have a space, so those who impose on them become now the stumbling block and corruption then becomes a way of life.

The other one is economy. Taking the resources, colonise them, made them part of your own business enterprise and the people have no access. They have to fight for the crumbs. Look at issues of corruption where Africans have no access to the world trade. I produce mangoes, banana, oranges, tea, coffee, but I cannot sell directly into a world market. I must have to go through second, third, fourth agents. And even then, I cannot even qualify for what another part of the world have defined for all the rest.

Why should it be only the dollar and the yen and the pound and the euro and so on that are exchangeable? But most of the African currencies have to go through other currencies to be accepted. Think about French colonial African countries. Their money is banked by the central bank of France. Or if you think about English countries, many of them, like Nigeria, they have to sell their oil and bank it in the USA.

So how is it that people stereotype you when they have hoodwinked and hijacked your authority? So the stereotypes are invalid. Allow Africans competition anywhere globally. In sports, they excel. In games, they excel. In dance, they excel. In music, they excel. In arts, they excel. But once you know, you say in banking, you don't give them a chance.

We must be allowed, and that's also part of the discussions moving into the 21st century to redefine the frames of reference.

Host:

Even after gaining independence in the post-colonial period, many African countries suffer from systematic marginalisation and exploitation to this day.

And as Professor. Obiora has shared, there are many forms through which this oppression persists, often through the modern institutions of trade and finance, ostensibly designed to champion equality.

An example is how the CFA franc currency has been historically imposed on the 14 Francophone African countries. In short, the CFA franc is pegged to the Euro and requires these nations to deposit 50% of their foreign reserves with the French Treasury. While this arrangement has

brought economic stability and growth, critics argue it perpetuates French domination and hinders true economic autonomy.

Another example is the International Criminal Court, or ICC, which to date, has indicted 44 individuals, 39 of whom are African leaders. While the ICC's actions have brought some measure of justice, critics contend that the court disproportionately targets Africa, neglecting equally grave atrocities in other regions.

These systems, under the guise of progress and fairness, perpetuate a cycle of dependency and disadvantage, hindering Africa's potential to achieve true sovereignty and sustainable development.