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Governance and Regional Co-Operation as Factors of Post-Independence Stability: The Role of Education in the Belgian Congo and French Senegal

Abstract

Both the Belgian Congo and French Senegal achieved independence in the climactic year of 1960. While the French presence had existed in Senegal for many centuries, albeit in an informal way until the late nineteenth century, the Belgian presence in the Congo was a, comparatively, immature colonial system. This paper argues that the educational policies of the Belgian and French colonial powers were one of the key elements of difference during the colonial period, ultimately impacting the varied outcomes post-independence in both the Congo and Senegal. The regional links created by the colonial apparatus, and indeed the connections to the metropole, were influential in creating post-independence stability. Additionally, the provision of adequate training in governance methods by the colonial apparatus influenced the formation of stable independent governments. By scrutinising two differing education systems this paper draws a picture of the varied elite development opportunities under colonialism, and attempts to suggest that the outcomes of autonomy found some of their basis in educational policies prior to independence. Such an argument relates to the theme of "Africa 2011" by examining the origins of current governance issues and indeed demonstrating the earliest manifestations of the regional relationships which exist today.

Introduction

In 1960 the famously termed, 'wind of change' was sweeping across the colonised African continent. The influence of World War II, the emphasis placed on self-determination by the United States and indeed, the financial burden of colonialism for European nations decimated by the war, were some of the many factors in the evolution of decolonisation. In that year alone, seventeen colonised states became sovereign nations. Amongst these were the Belgian possession in Africa, the Congo, and the French West African territory of Senegal.

Belgian control of the Congo dated back to the late 1800s when King Leopold II appointed the American journalist and adventurer Henry Morton Stanley to explore the Congo basin under the flag of the 'philanthropic' International African Association. Prior to this, the regions around the Congo basin remained relatively unknown to Europeans. Despite the apathetic perspective of the Belgian parliament, Leopold continued his quest to acquire a personal fiefdom amidst the European scramble for Africa, securing his position at the 1884 Berlin Conference. During the period from 1885 to 1908 the

Belgian King solely owned the Congo, isolating it from association with other colonised states. Rubber and copper became the drivers of the economy. Forced production was rampant, leading the British Consul Roger Casement to denounce the system of exploitation in 1908, ultimately catalysing one of the major scandals of the early twentieth century. As a result of the campaigns against his control, Leopold II bequeathed the Congo Free State to the Belgian government in 1908, when it officially became a colony of the Belgian state and known as the Belgian Congo until independence in 1960.¹

In Senegal, French influence, and indeed the influence of other European states and traders, had been felt for many centuries prior to formal colonisation. As early as the fifteenth century Portuguese explorers had made contacts with the inhabitants of coastal Senegal. By the nineteenth century, France had secured its hold on the region, and throughout the 1850s the Governor Louis Faidherbe extended French power in the region militarily, using Algeria as a model for which to set up the colonial administration. The *Quatre Communes* of Gorée, Rufisque, Saint-Louis and Dakar became centres of French colonialism, granting certain privileged rights of citizenship to their inhabitants and separating them from the *sujets* of the rural regions. By 1900 the territory of French West Africa was intact, and it was formally named in 1904. Dakar became the centre of colonial administration for *L'Afrique Occidentale Française* (AOF), focusing the control of the AOF through Senegal. Thus, from its inception as a formally colonised state, Senegal not only felt the might of French colonial administration but also, through its central position in the bureaucracy, was linked to other AOF territories.²

Both the Congo and Senegal then, had very different experiences of early colonialism and its impact. While French influence was gradual in Senegal until the mid-1800s and was less explosive in its immediate effect on the population, in the Congo the imposition of Belgian authority was relatively rapid and definitively transformative for pre-colonial African life through the imposition of forced labour. By the mid-twentieth century such variations of the frameworks and foundations of colonialism had created the basis for very diverse outcomes between the respective nationalist movements. Thus, the methods of governance employed by both colonial states, while sharing certain similarities, ultimately produced differing effects on the results of independence in 1960. In this paper I will argue that the educational policies of each colonial power

¹ For a detailed discussion of Leopold's Congo see Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, Boston, 1998. For a general survey of the Congo from its earliest colonial incarnation to more recent events see Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo From Leopold to Kabila: A People's History*, London and New York, 2002.

² For a survey of pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence Senegal see Sheldon Gellar, *Democracy in Senegal: Tocquevillian Analytics in Africa*, New York, 2005. For a broad view of the French empire in its entirety see Alice L. Conklin, Sarah Fishman and Robert Zaretsky, *France and its Empire since 1870*, New York, 2011.

were one of the many manifestations of structural difference during the colonial period, and ultimately impacted the outcomes post-independence.

The links created by the colonial apparatus with other territories within the geographical region, and indeed with the metropole itself, undoubtedly played a large role in creating regional, and specific territorial, stability. The provision of adequate training in governance methods by the colonial apparatus influenced the formation of stable independent governments. Thus, the key to understanding both regional awareness and governance ability amongst the African elite leadership lies, I argue, in the examination of education provision by the colonial state prior to independence. Education was pivotal in the development of an African elite leadership capable of governing an independent state. For the colonised individual, education was a means of acquiring not only elite status but also the opportunity to advance within private enterprise and the administration. Through such advancement training in the methods of governance was gained, albeit most often from a subaltern position. Additionally, through the opportunities given by education, African elites gained access to an intellectual milieu outside their specific territory, creating personal and political links with other colonised elites throughout their region.

I hope to demonstrate that the foundations of the varied outcomes of regional cooperation and governance stability in the Belgian Congo and French Senegal post-independence lie in education and the varied opportunities it provides. While colonial education policy has been examined before, its influence on post-independence stability and the development of trained elites has been somewhat neglected. Thus, I intend to go some way in rectifying such an omission through focused comparative analysis. By scrutinising two differing education systems I will draw a picture of the varied elite development opportunities under colonialism and attempt to suggest that the outcomes of autonomy found some of their basis in educational policies prior to independence.

Colonial Structures

Throughout this paper the term 'colonial structures' will refer to the overarching framework of colonialism implemented by the respective colonial power. By this I mean not only the physical policies implemented by Belgium and France, but also the philosophies behind the colonial project. I will deal firstly with the conceptual ideas behind the patterns of colonialism in each state. I will then examine their implications in regards educational policies and the opportunities provided by such policies.

Senegal

French colonial structures were based primarily on the concept of assimilation. Assimilation by definition was a practice which attempted to develop the African population educationally, culturally and politically to an equal level of 'civilisation' as that of the French. The ostensible aim of such a philosophy was the eventual granting of

citizenship to the 'assimilated' Senegalese, though this was often not the case. Practically, the French based their concepts of a colonial state on the idea of a strongly centralised administration with territorial governors of the AOF answerable to the Governor-General based in Dakar, who in turn answered to Paris.³ In reality, such a system was weakened by the lack of manpower and, as a result, in many rural regions the French colonial administration relied on the traditional African power structures to implement their policies and collect taxes. Sheldon Gellar succinctly argues the colonisers "built their new order organized by the French colonial state on the ruins of the old."⁴ Thus, the French devalued their position on assimilation by allowing the status of pre-colonial African leadership to remain unchanged, ultimately permitting the formation and continuation of a rural African class of administrators based on the 'traditional' precepts of society. Additionally, by allowing the previous systems of power to remain intact, albeit in an altered state, France ensured the continuation of regional links and relationships which had been established centuries before outside the sphere of colonialism. Nevertheless, despite its failures as a social tool for creating 'Black Frenchmen', assimilation provided the foundation for French policies of colonialism and, especially in the *Quatre Communes* where it was much more rigorously applied, became a means for aspirant Africans to attain positions of relative power within the administration.

Another facet of French colonial life was an emphasis on the secularisation which had germinated in the Republican ideals of the French Revolution. J. P. Daughton's *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism and the Making of French Colonialism, 1880-1914* highlights the incomplete and complex nature of secularisation in the colonies, providing evidence as to the high levels of cooperation, albeit volatile, between colonisers and religious missions.⁵ Indeed, Léopold Sédar Senghor, the first president of Senegal, was educated at the primary and partially at the secondary level, by Catholic French missions.⁶ Nevertheless, in Senegal, particularly in regards the pervasiveness of Islamic influence, secularisation of administration and education was an important element of French colonial policy. By shaping their policy in such a non-confrontational and non-proselytising way, the French went some distance in justifying,

³ Martin Shipway, *Decolonization and its Impact: A Comparative Approach to the End of the Colonial Empires*, Oxford, 2008, p.32.

⁴ Gellar, *Democracy in Senegal*, p. 29. This point is also emphasised by Emily Lynn Osborn, "Circle of Iron: African Colonial Employees and the Interpretation of Colonial Rule in French West Africa", *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 44, No. 1, 2003, pp. 29-50.

⁵ J. P. Daughton, *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the making of French Colonialism, 1880 – 1914*, New York, 2006, p. 6: Colonial officials, facing a shortage of finances and manpower "regularly turned to the most convenient and inexpensive alternative to implement their programs: Catholic missions." (The focus of Daughton's study is a broader sweep of the French colonies. However, his arguments are applicable on the smaller scale of FWA).

⁶ For a detailed account of Senghor's childhood and education see Janet G. Vaillant's biography, *Léopold Sédar Senghor: Black, French and African*, Cambridge Massachusetts, 1990.

to themselves at least, the conflict between the universalist values of French Republicanism “and the racial hierarchy and social inequalities embedded in the colonial order.”⁷ Additionally, by implementing secular values and working with, rather than against, Islam and Islamic leaders, the French created a stable administrative basis from which the bureaucracy of independence emerged after 1960.

However, though both the policies of secularisation and assimilation may suggest an adherence to the espoused *mission civilisatrice*, in reality such ideals often fell short. Though the ostensible aim of assimilationist policies was that of educating Africans in the French language, culture and values in order to create a level of equality with their colonisers, frequently assimilated Africans were expected to undertake minor roles within the bureaucracy. Senghor hints toward such a situation when he suggests the entire purpose of colonisation was “directed to the sole end of enriching the colonizer” rather than improving the lot of the colonised.⁸ Thus, though positions were available to Europeanised Africans, they were subaltern roles. Additionally, the African employees of the rural areas often remained untouched by assimilationist aspirations, utilising their role within the French bureaucracy to accumulate their own power base and wealth. Such policies periodically gave way to a paternalistic means of colonisation, particularly in regards the rural *sujets* who were often outside the sphere of French assimilationist intent. Therefore, though assimilation and secularisation as colonial structures were utilised with somewhat noble purpose, often the policies served to alienate the colonisers from the colonised and failed to provide enough adequate opportunities for advancement within the administration. Evidently then, “French policy was never as assimilationist as it pretended to be,” ultimately resulting in a limited and reluctant form of African autonomy.⁹

The Congo

Belgian governmental colonialism came into being in 1908. It was built upon the “three pillars” of State, Church and Big Business and it was noticeable for its density of administrators and colonial officials. Throughout the 1950s approximately 10,000 Belgian administrators operated within the Congo, equating to approximately one administrator per 1,200 Congolese.¹⁰ The dominance of the colonial system on daily life for the Congolese was complete; movement between rural areas and cities was regulated, segregation occurred between white areas and black townships, rubber collection was compulsory in rural areas and strict censorship of educational materials

⁷ Martin Thomas. “Part Two: French Decolonization”, in Martin Thomas, Bob Moore, L.J. Butler, *Crises of Empire: Decolonization and Europe’s Imperial States, 1918-1975*, London, 2008, p. 127.

⁸ Léopold Sédar Senghor, ed. and trans. John Reed and Clive Wake, *Senghor: Prose and Poetry*, London, 1965, p. 51: *Vues sur l’Afrique Noire, ou Assimiler, non être assimilés*, 1945.

⁹ Remi P. Clignet and Philip J. Foster, “French and British Colonial Education in Africa”, *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 8, No. 2, (Oct. 1964), pp. 191 -198, p. 192.

¹⁰ Crawford Young, *Politics in the Congo: Decolonization and Independence*, Princeton University Press, 1965, p. 310.

and entertainment possibilities was the norm. Though French colonialism could also be cited as somewhat paternalistic, the assimilationist aims ensured a minority of Senegalese could attain relative equality of opportunity with their colonisers. In comparison, though the Belgians too espoused the notions of a civilising mission, in reality the colonial structures formulated in the Congo ensured little opportunity for the advancement of Congolese.

Belgian paternalism was based on the concepts of the savage and childlike nature of African civilisation. Like the French, the Belgians believed their civilisation to be vastly superior to that of the African. However, unlike the French, the Belgians envisioned their subjects as childlike charges, over which they had to rule in order to protect the Congolese from themselves.¹¹ Writing in 1956-57 Patrice Lumumba, the first president of the Congo, endorses paternalism as “still necessary for the uneducated masses who are unable to defend themselves and look after themselves,” though he argues for greater rights and opportunities for the country’s elites.¹² Thus, it is evident that as late as 1956-57 paternalism, and its controlling ethic, was still the main driver of Belgian colonialism and ultimately served to limit the scope for advancement for the Congolese. The all-encompassing nature of such paternalism was cemented physically by the scale of the administration and philosophically by the domination of African autonomous power through the limitations imposed on those deemed ‘civilised’. Additionally, the separation of the Congolese colonial service from the Belgian administration – ensuring pensions and wages were paid directly from Congolese funds – meant that colonial civil servants were more inclined to reject calls for African advancement in favour of their own job prospects and security.¹³

¹¹ Auguste Buisseret, *The Policy of Belgium in her Overseas Territories*, Address given to the House of Representatives, June 26, 1957, Information and Public Relations Office for the Belgian Congo and Ruanda Urundi, Brussels, 1957 p. 4: “The populations had scarcely left the prehistoric age and it was only the Belgian administration which gave the territory any semblance of coherence.” Buisseret was, at the time, considered one of the more progressive colonial ministers for his attempts to secularise colonial education.

¹² Patrice Lumumba, *Congo, My Country*, London, 1962, (First published 1961, Office de Publicité, Brussels as *Le Congo – Terre d’Avenir – Est-il Menacé?*), p. 14.

¹³ Pierre Wigny, “Belgium and the Congo”, *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 199-)*, Vol. 37, No. 3, (Jul. 1961), pp. 273-284, p. 274: Wigny, a one-time colonial minister, presents such a separation as beneficial to the Congolese, arguing “that all the shares, the reserves, the gold and the dollars acquired by the Congo were retained for its own use.” Georges Brausch, *Belgian Administration in the Congo*, London, 1961 (Institute of Race Relations), p.44-47: Brausch was a colonial service policymaker within the administration and a commentator on the Belgian colonial system. His book displays his partisan liberal outlook but is useful for understanding the complexities of the politics surrounding decolonisation in the Congo. He also provides detailed accounts of the working of such a large-scale administration; “This survey shows that the Belgian colonial administration strongly encouraged the building of an autonomous self-ruling system of local government...while as we shall see in the following section the establishment of an autonomous, self-ruling Central Government was persistently discouraged.” Thus, the Belgians instituted a dual system, whereby Congolese ‘traditional’

Unlike French republican secularism, Belgium was an extremely religious society, an element of European culture which seeped into the colonial system. During the consolidation of Leopold II's rule Christian missions played an active role, beyond their evangelical purposes, in extending his power.¹⁴ An agreement made between Leopold and the Vatican in 1906 ensured the continuation of this dynamic past his personal rule and consolidated the pre-eminence of Belgian missionaries above other nationalities. Essentially, the agreements created a framework of cooperation and assistance between the Church and the colonial administration which would continue until 1960.¹⁵ Additionally, apathy amongst political parties allowed the Belgian Catholic Party (*Parti Social Chrétien*) to dominate control of the colonial ministry, effectively giving it free reign over colonial policy.¹⁶ By creating such an exclusive relationship between the Belgian state and Belgian missionaries Leopold, and the successive administrations after 1908, ensured any influences outside the Belgian realm were minimal, reducing the scope for regional relationships to form.

As a result of the influences of paternalism and religion Congolese society during the colonial period was very internally-orientated, with few links to both its regional counterparts in Africa and the Belgian metropole. The separation of the colonial civil service from the Belgian service helped promulgate the sense of isolation within the colony, while the utilisation of the Belgian Church as a crutch for the state reduced the scope for interaction with external influences. Indeed, the divisions within Belgian society itself made the dynamic even more complex. The dissemination of French culture in Senegal was relatively effective due to the strength of the French national psyche and collective ethos; in Belgium the divisions between Flemish and Walloon and the lack of a unified culture meant influence on Congolese society was weakened.¹⁷ The lack of a coherent European culture to aspire to permitted the elite of the Congolese to formulate their own cultural references, creating an "*interpretation* of Western and

societies had a measure of communal leadership through Bantu customs but centralised governance was undertaken purely by Belgian colonial administrators. As a result, Belgian colonial ministers were much more inclined to continue the status quo rather than train African elite.

¹⁴ Marvin D. Markowitz, "The Missions and Political Development in the Congo", *Africa: The Journal of International Africa Institute*, Vol. 40, No. 3, (Jul. 1970), pp. 234-247, p. 235

¹⁵ Young, *Politics in the Congo*, p. 13.

¹⁶ Brausch, *Administration in the Congo*, p. 62-3: Apathy was evident in the fact the Minister of Colonies generally delivered his annual report to a near-empty parliament.

¹⁷ In Senegal as well, the emphasis on secularisation removed ethnicity and religion as factors of possible tension from the elite strata of society. In the Congo however, Belgian national divisions reflected the divisive nature of their administration in the Congo. Tensions in the Belgian national psyche over its own self-image thus seeped into the colony, increasing divisions between different ethnicities through administrative regulations (i.e. often, when filling out forms Congolese had to designate their ethnicity and tribal origins, constantly reinforcing notions of separation and difference).

African civilisations.”¹⁸ Thus, the Congolese experience of colonialism was an isolating one of mixed messages and failed attempts at cultural imposition aligned with the brute force of dense administrative colonialism.

Education in Senegal and the Congo

Writing in the late 1930s Derwent Whittlesey stated “the school is perhaps the most vital cog in France’s colonial administration.”¹⁹ Education offered the opportunity for the colonising power to instil national values within its subjugated peoples. It provided a means for re-organising African cultural values along lines condoned and established by the administration. For the African, education also provided opportunity. Education gave the colonised African the ability to advance himself, both personally and within the professional sphere, through private industry or within the public sector. It provided the possibility of an increased status within the community while granting the opportunity for a more comfortable personal life. However, though education offered opportunities for Africans, in the majority of colonial states the possibilities for advancement were capped once a limit, established by the colonising power, was reached. Thus, education became the battlefield of repression and advancement; it became the training-ground of the future independent leadership and the means by which they developed the opportunity for relationships with other regional leaders, yet it also remained a tool of control for the colonisers.

The colonial educational systems of the French and the Belgians, based ultimately on their overarching colonial structures of assimilation and paternalism, differed significantly. The French system, whereby integration within the French cultural framework was a key element of policy, allowed for an increased involvement of Africans in education, and as a result, in colonial and regional politics. In contrast, the Belgian paternalistic attitude delayed the development of a state-run colonial education system past primary level, and hampered the progress of African political development by both impeding the evolution of an educated elite, and restricting the opportunities for the minority which did exist. A comparison of these two educational systems creates a new dimension within existing scholarship by highlighting education as a key foundation for post-independence stability and suggesting the differing methods of colonial systems were the root causes of the varied outcomes of statehood after 1960.

Senegal

In Senegal the education system was structured on a dual level. While rural African schools educated the masses, the French schools were more elitist, selecting the most promising students, or indeed, those who were in some way connected to the colonial administration. These French schools focused on creating an African elite class, which could fill the lower ranks of the administration across the vast space of French

¹⁸ Lumumba, *Congo, My Country*, p. 186.

¹⁹ Derwent Whittlesey, “British and French Colonial Technique in West Africa”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 15, 1936-1937, pp. 362-373, p. 369.

West Africa.²⁰ Though the primary impetus for such a system was the creation of a functioning, somewhat, Africanised bureaucracy, the French ensured limits remained on the possibilities for promotion. As a result, though ostensibly the French policy was to create a French 'civilisation' within Senegal, the necessity of maintaining colonial dominance ensured the majority of schooling focused on creating a 'mediator' class of Africans who could moderate between the French and the uneducated masses.²¹ Despite this, a minority of fortunate pupils, such as the first president Léopold Sédar Senghor, were permitted to advance to higher educational levels, including prestigious institutions in the metropole. It was through these opportunities that the possibility of governance experience, and indeed the creation of regional links, was advanced.

In regards the provision of education, French republican secular values created tension in justifying a mass missionary-led education system. In the later stages of the existence of the colony, though the secular state was the main provider of education, missionaries did have a minor amount of influence. As a result of logistics and expenditure limitations, France was faced with the challenge, through the provision of education, of reconciling its secular values with the necessity of utilising missionaries as educational instructors. The compromise reached, whereby the missions were relatively insignificant in education and mainly operated in rural regions, allowed the French to reduce costs while maintaining control of the values and cultural philosophies promoted through education. For the Senegalese who attained the opportunity to advance to higher levels of education, the French-led system allowed greater possibility of interaction with the metropole and other colonised pupils.²² Additionally, as the educational system was French-led, rather than missionary based, the focus was

²⁰ Bob W. White, "Talk About School: Education and the Colonial Project in French and British Africa, 1860-1960", *Comparative Education*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 1996, pp. 9 – 26, p. 12.

²¹ Peggy R. Sabatier, "'Elite' Education in French West Africa: The Era of Limits, 1903-1945", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1978, pp. 247-266, p. 248.

Clignet and Foster, "French and British Colonial Education in Africa", p. 192: "French policy was never as assimilationist as it pretended to be." Mamadou Dia, *Mémoires d'un Militant du Tiers-Monde*, Paris, 1985, p. 29: Most pupils at the École William Ponty, like Dia himself, were trainee teachers.

²² The case of Léopold Sédar Senghor is a key example of such opportunities. Though missionaries undertook his earliest schooling, his Senegalese educational experiences eventually led him to studies at the Sorbonne where he became the first African to attain an *agrégé*. The opportunities to mix with a milieu of colonised and French intellectuals in Paris broadened his scope for debate and ultimately permitted the formation of one of his key philosophies, *négritude*. It allowed him to build influence amongst the elite of other colonies, and indeed of France itself, thus providing a solid basis of political support for his later entry into politics. For Senghor education was, as he later hoped it would be for all of Senegal, "a continual confrontation and yet at the same time a continual exchange of opinions between Europe and Africa," and indeed within Africa itself. Senghor, *Prose and Poetry*, p. 53 *Vues sur l'Afrique Noire, ou Assimiler, non être assimilés*, 1945. For a detailed account of these experiences see Vaillant, *Black, French and African*.

primarily on French values and the systems enshrined within such values, such as democracy and centralised governance. The outcome was a unified system whereby concessions to ethnic and linguistic differences amongst the Senegalese were relegated to insignificance.

The result of such a system was the creation of a process of training and advancement of regional links. With Dakar as the hub of French West African administration, the École William Ponty attracted the educated elite of all the colonised French territories, creating an African milieu of future leaders. Additionally, some Senegalese were funded to continue their studies in the metropole, further broadening their scope for interaction with other colonised elites. In regards governance, the establishment of a system where French values were espoused ensured an awareness of the workings of a large administration. The education system also provided the opportunity for its students to gain administrative employment, albeit at a lower level within the colonial service. Thus, though the “fossilized tradition” of French culture, which permeated the secondary schooling of Senegal, was criticised by Senghor, it did lead to limited opportunity for the elite.²³

The Congo

In the Belgian Congo the structure of the educational system remained more focused on the primary level with little options for continued education. The primary level consisted of two years, with a further three completed at a second level.²⁴ Georges Brausch, in his extensive survey of Belgian administration in the Congo, wrote that in 1958 ninety-four per cent of the school population was in primary education.²⁵ Such a high level of the student population at the elementary stage of education suggests that, firstly, the development of education in the Congo came at a late stage prior to independence, and secondly, that options for post-primary education were limited, restricting the opportunity for further study and ultimately for governance experience and association with a regional intellectual milieu. Additionally, in the Belgian Congo the structure of education differed greatly from that of the colonial centre, with a large focus placed on vocational and technical training. Such a focus once more undermined the potential for elite development within the colonial system while isolating the Congo from its colonial metropole. The aim of such primary-orientated and vocational schooling was to create a class of semi-educated Africans who could undertake the menial jobs of colonisation while consolidating the security of the Belgian administration’s position. Nevertheless, limited opportunities were available for a very

²³ Senghor, *Prose and Poetry*, p. 52 *Vues sur l’Afrique Noire, ou Assimiler, non être assimilés*, 1945.

²⁴ J. S. Harris, “Education in the Belgian Congo”, *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 15, No. 3, (Summer, 1946), pp. 410-426, p. 421. Harris was an anthropologist who undertook pioneering field work in Africa (as well as having served as a clandestine agent for the U.S. in Africa during World War II).

²⁵ Brausch, *Administration in the Congo*, p. 11.

small number of elites; by independence there were only thirty-one Congolese university graduates.²⁶

Unlike Senegal where the situation was complicated by French secularism, in the Belgian Congo the Belgian Catholic missionaries dominated the provision of education. The utilisation of Belgian missionaries ensured cultural values were diffused amongst the Congolese, albeit in a limited way due to the divisions within Belgian culture itself. Writing in 1934 Ellsworth Faris, a one-time missionary to the Belgian Congo, identified four types of schools; firstly, he writes of unsubsidised schools, usually under the direction of Protestant missionaries, secondly he identifies Catholic-run schools which were subsidised by the Belgian colonial government, thirdly he recognises state-run, government schools which generally employed teachers from religious orders, and finally, he identifies the higher level schools, of which there were few, which focused on technical training for a specific role.²⁷ Thus, unless one completed elementary education and progressed to further technical training the likelihood was the entire schooling would have been undertaken under the supervision of a religious order, and due to their prevalence, most likely under the supervision of a Belgian Catholic missionary. Such focus of education in the hands of Belgian missionaries isolated the Congolese from outside influence and promoted the private agendas of the religious orders. Additionally, the failure to provide adequate secondary education created a void of trained leadership for independence. The few who were lucky enough to continue their studies were often from privileged backgrounds or were determined to advance themselves outside the Belgian system.²⁸

The result of such a rudimentary, religiously dominated system, was a failure to formulate an elite base from which the future government of the independent Congo could be drawn. The differing employment levels within the colonial administration system identified by Georges Bruasch undermined the opportunity for Congolese advancement and training. While he argues such a system allowed the involvement of huge numbers of the masses to involve themselves with politics, in reality it served to relegate the Congolese to subservient positions and ensure their lack of education in

²⁶ Wigny, "Belgium and the Congo", p. 276: Official figure from a one-time colonial minister. See Thomas Kanza, *Conflict in the Congo*, London, 1972; Kanza was one of the few elite who obtained permission to travel to and study in Belgium. In his introduction Kanza writes how his life, viewed from a European perspective, seems unremarkable. However, within the Congolese context of the time he was privileged. P. 7.

²⁷ Ellsworth Faris, "Native Education in the Belgian Congo", *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 3, No. 1, (Jan. 1934), pp.123-130, p. 125.

²⁸ An example of this is Patrice Lumumba, the first president of the Congo, who had a ruptured childhood education and eventually resorted to self-education as an adult. His later radicalisation stems from the failure of the Belgian colonisers to provide a route for Congolese advancement; "while other territories advanced politically, the Congo stagnated because of the do-nothing policy of the Belgian administration." Jean Van Lierde (ed.), *Lumumba Speaks: The Speeches and Writings of Patrice Lumumba, 1958-1961*, Boston and Toronto, 1972, p. 116.

democracy, governance and administration.²⁹ Thus, in Brausch's words, the Congo was "insufficiently prepared for its task, because of a too rapid and badly organised approach to independence."³⁰ Such failings ultimately led to political isolation, inexperience of governance structures and political instability.

Conclusion

Improvements in education occurred in both colonies in the mid to late 1950s, including the establishment of universities. However, the leadership cadre which was to emerge from such improvements was too immature to affect the immediate outcomes of independence in 1960. The task fell to those of the previous generation who had emerged from within the colonial structures of paternalism and assimilation to campaign for greater autonomy, and eventually, independence. This newly created social group of educated elite utilised the limited education and opportunities provided by the coloniser to reframe African pre-colonial concepts in Western language and ferment political thought in light of the colonial experience.³¹ However, while the Senegalese received practical training through employment within the administration, and indeed for a select few, participation in the National Assembly, the Congolese were forced to examine from outside the workings of a central government.

Thus, education can be shown to have played a key role in providing opportunities for advancement within the colonial structure. However, the limits of such opportunity were defined both by the access to education and by the 'civilising' aims of the colonial power. While both colonisers espoused their adherence to the *mission civilisatrice*, the 'success' of such a mission in preparing the colonised for stable independence varied greatly. The calls by Lumumba for elite participation in the running of the country in the Congo, as late as 1956-57, are suggestive of the failures of education and the colonial structures to provide advancement opportunities to the Congolese.³² In contrast, in Senegal, by 1956-57 Senghor was an experienced participant in the French National Assembly and involved in the drafting of the Fifth Republic's constitution.

²⁹ Brausch, *Administration in the Congo*, p. 45.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 87: Brausch concludes these were the reasons for the crisis that enveloped the Congo post-independence. I would further his argument by stating the root causes of such a lack of preparation stem from the Belgian failure to properly organise a secular and consistent education system.

³¹ The "*acculturating*" urged by Senghor in Léopold Sédar Senghor, trans Mercer Cook, *Nationhood and the African Road to Socialism*, Paris, 1962, p. 81, "Report on the Party's Doctrine and Programme – Report to the Constitutive Congress of the African Federal Party", Dakar, July 1, 1959. The "*task of humanising and harmonising opposing interests and relations between Europeans and Africans*" outlined by Lumumba in Lumumba, *Congo my Country*, p. 94 (his italics).

³² Lumumba, *Congo my Country*, p. 37: "The participation of the elite in the running of the country, from the suburban council up to the highest spheres, would provide a symbol of Belgo-Congolese unity."

The differences of situation for both men, three years prior to independence, are indicative of the results of colonial education in regards independent governance and the forging of regional links. Senghor, through the educational system provided by France, attended prestigious institutions in Paris, and had the opportunity to forge links with regional and global colonised elite. Additionally, through his success within the French education system, Senghor attained the skills necessary to enter the political fray in Senegal and craft an important political presence within the French National Assembly and amongst other French West African politicians.³³ In contrast, Lumumba's education was self-driven and external to the colonial structures implemented by Belgium. His experience of administration was formed in the many local societies and clubs of pre-independence Leopoldville and Stanleyville. His connections to other African elite were, at first, purely within a Congolese context. It was not until independence was assured did his contacts expand with his attendance at African conferences, such as Accra and Ibadan, and later in Belgium at *Amis des Présence Africaine* events and indeed the Round Table Conference of 1960.

Thus, Congolese politics prior to independence were in an infant state. The elites had been forced to create their own training-systems of governance outside the framework of the colonial structures imposed by Belgium. The possibilities for the creation of regional links within such a restrictive system were miniscule. The "imperative need for financial, technical and scientific aid from the West" articulated by Lumumba highlights the failures of the Belgian colonial education system to adequately train an autonomous elite within a stable political environment, both regionally and within Congolese state boundaries.³⁴ While the French colonial education system cannot claim perfection, arguably the opportunities inherent within its structures were more accessible to the Senegalese than that of the Belgian system in the Congo³⁵. Such opportunities permitted greater experience of stable governance from within the system and, through the possibility of participation in politics within the National Assembly, created the prospect of regional cooperation and integration amongst autonomous formerly French West African states. Though both colonial systems of education were limited, the French system gave birth to an increased likelihood of a secure independent Senegal by providing more of the skills necessary to create a stable, regionally-linked, self-governed state.

³³ Senghor served as state secretary in Edgar Faure's government from March 1955 to February 1956. Additionally in his student years in Paris Senghor mingled with Aimé Césaire, Leon Damas and Georges Pompidou to name but a few. Later, during his political apprenticeship in French politics Senghor associated with other French West African *députés* with whom he attempted to build political alliances across the Federation.

³⁴ Lumumba, *Congo my Country*, p. 73.

³⁵ Kanza, *Conflict in the Congo*, p. 11-12: In the Congo the ability to travel and study in the metropole was heavily restricted, Kanza writes that in 1956 there were only thirty students from both the Congo and Ruanda-Burundi in Belgium. Additionally, until the 1958 World Fair in Brussels "very few of us had been given an opportunity to meet Belgians in their own country."

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