



## **Imperialism, crime and criminology: Towards the decolonisation of criminology**

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**Abstract.** Cohen (1988) once concluded that it is ironic that critics in the West are identifying forms of social control that are more traditional in the Third World as better alternatives to the neo-classical and positivistic repressive traditions in the West while some suggest that what they found malignant in the West should be exported to the Third World as benign. In this paper, I am going beyond Western crime control models to examine the character of criminology itself as an imperialist science for the control of others.

### **Introduction**

The enormous dimensions of criminological knowledge are concentrated in a few hands and create an extremely extensive network of close ties and relationships which involve not only the young and middle-aged criminologists, but also even the very young students. This, on the one hand, and on the other the bitter struggle against other disciplinary groups of scholars for the partition of the world of knowledge and the right to rule over Others – these two factors taken together cause the complete conversion of conventional criminologists to the side of imperialism. The signs of the times are a “general” enthusiasm regarding the prospects of imperialist reason, a passionate defence of imperialism, and every possible camouflage of the real nature of imperialism and the complicity of criminology in its genealogy.

(paraphrase of the epigraph in Nkrumah, 1968, from Lenin, 1996)<sup>1</sup>

Criminology is far from being a rocket science or brain surgery (the discovery of the skull of a notorious brigand by Lombroso, notwithstanding). So why is it that Third World countries that offer courses in rocket science and brain surgery are shy of offering undergraduate degrees in criminology? My major thesis is that the reason for this academic lethargy is mainly because criminology is a social science that served colonialism more directly than many other social sciences and yet the critique that Anthropology, Sociology and Political Science have been subjected to in this respect is yet to be extended

to criminology. See Claude Ake (1979) *Social Science as Imperialism: The Theory of Development* for a critique of bourgeois political science. See also Archie Mafeje (1998) "Anthropology and Independent Africans: Suicide or End of an Era?" in *African Sociological Review*, Vol.2, No.1 and responses to Mafeje in the same issue of the journal. This paper is an intervention aimed at decolonising theories and methods of the empire of law in criminology. The paper goes beyond the theoretical footprints on the sand left by Stan Cohen in a paper originally presented at a conference on "Crime and Crime Control in Developing Countries" organised by the Research Committee on Deviance and Social Control, International Sociological Association, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, July 9–12, 1980. In the paper, "Western Crime Control Models in the Third World: Benign or Malignant" he stated that "Criminologists have either ignored the Third World completely or treated it in a most theoretically primitive fashion, and the general literature on development and colonialism is remarkably silent about crime" (Cohen, 1988: 172). He concluded that it is ironic that critics in the West are identifying forms of social control that are more traditional in the Third World as better alternatives to the neo-classical and positivistic repressive traditions in the West while some suggest that what they found malignant in the West should be exported to the Third World as benign. Echoes of these neglected thoughts were heard in Brisbane, Australia, when I presented this paper to the same research committee of the ISA twenty-two years later in July 2002. In this paper, I am going beyond Western crime control models to examine the character of criminology itself as an imperialist science for the control of others.

Many African American criminologists (Tatum, 1996 for example) have examined the colonial model that seeks to apply the insights of Frantz Fanon to an explanation of the over-representation of minorities in the criminal justice system. Young and Turner (1985) offered a similar historical approach to understanding crimes of the state and corruption in neo-colonial Zaire under Mobutu Sese Seko. Pepinsky (1991) has argued that the geometry of violence cannot be explained without bringing into consideration, the violence of imperialist power in foreign countries. Scraton (1990) has called for the history of colonialism to be made an essential element of criminology courses. A few papers are being published by Australian and New Zealand criminologists on the incredible injustice done to the native populations as part of colonialism (see, Midford, 1992). However, to my knowledge, no one has tried to examine the extent to which criminology is inherently a colonial enterprise or why this repressive technology is monopolised by imperialist countries while the former colonised countries do not seem to care.

### The gangster philosophy of enlightenment

The influence of the Holy Roman Empire on the evolution of European penology is all too obvious. Many legal historians would emphasize the role of many Roman emperors, Emperor Napoleon and German legal scholars in laying the foundation of the Romano-Germanic family of law that dominates continental Europe today. However, when it comes to modern European imperialism and the imposition of often perverted Western ideas about “crime and punishment” on the rest of the world and the heroic resistance to this imposition of a largely puzzling *criminal* justice, conventional criminology is curiously silent. This conspiracy of silence is perhaps due to criminology’s complicity in the imperialist project. The silence could also be partly due to the questionable nature of *criminal* justice in the face of resolute resistance against colonial injustice in contrast to the *relative* legal consensus among the ruling capitalist classes of Europe. From your reading of history, you must be familiar with the socio-cultural contexts within which the Enlightenment movement developed and from which the movement broke off to found modernity. The pre-Enlightenment period was the era of Divine explanations for power and misconduct – Kings ruled because they had the divine right to rule and people became deviant as a result of demonic possession from which they had to be exorcised and purified if possible or with which they must be destroyed in order to be saved in the hereafter. The demonic judicial process was characterised by public executions for serious “offenders” or sinners, pillory and shame for cheats, the centralisation of judicial authority in the hands of religious officials, public administration of punishment in the community and, above all, the phallogentric bias against pagan women who were executed as witches (Pfohl, 1994). In this sense, the Enlightenment or *Iluminismo* in Portuguese, was a progressive movement in social thought aimed at the liberation of individuals from despotic rule by forces of nature, religious orthodoxy and political traditionalism in Europe.

Piers Beirne analysed how a French man was executed wrongly in 1761 for the murder of his son who had actually committed suicide. Three years later, Beccaria published anonymously, his best seller, *Treatise on Crime and Punishment*, condemning the arbitrary power exercised by judges and calling for a rational application of the law based on the principle of equality. He also called for the abolition of death penalty because, according to him, the right to take life was not one of the rights that individuals held in the state of nature and so it is not one of the rights that people gave up to the state to be exercised on their behalf under the social contract. However, his insistence that punishment should be made to fit the crime continued to provide his supporters with the excuse to retain capital punishment as the only penalty that fitted certain crimes. At the same time, his opponents were powerful members of

the justice system and the church who ridiculed his idea of equality before the law and convinced the Pope to ban his treatise for almost 200 years (Beirne, 1993). The execution of a single innocent Frenchman counts for more in the conventional history of the invention of criminology than the genocidal Trans Atlantic Slavery in which tens of millions of Africans were destroyed or the genocide against Native Americans and aboriginal Australians by European *conquistados*. The European slave trade was the testing ground for the Enlightenment's credentials as a libratory thought but as Paul Gilroy (1993), Frantz Fanon (1963) and Walter Rodney (1972) – all descendants of enslaved Africans – have shown, *Iluminismo* was pathetically blinded by what Retamar (1979) analysed as the "Black Legend". According to the myth of the black legend, Spain was blamed by Britain and France for giving a bad name to imperialism due to its more brutal form of the civilising process but Retamar argues that "If anything distinguishes the Spanish conquest from the depredations of Holland, France, England, Germany, Belgium or the United States. . . it is not the proportion of crimes – in this they are all worthy rivals – but rather the proportion of scruples".

The conquest of the New World and the European Slavery systematised the persecution of people simply because they appeared different long before this experiment was extended to the "witches" of Europe. It was at the height of the slave trade that classicism emerged to challenge the arbitrary nature of punishment in medieval Europe but this insight was not extended to enslaved Africans who were arbitrarily victimised even when they did no wrong. However, it was not until the height of colonialism in Africa and Asia that Europe discovered the new "science" of criminology as a tool to aid the control of the other – a supposed advancement on classicist philosophies of justice. This was also the time that the Marquis de Sade was writing about the pleasure of administering pain on innocent people (Pfohl, 1994), a metaphor for imperialism except that the sadist did not live on the surpluses of sadism, unlike the colonialist. However, the talk of retribution and utilitarianism could well become metaphors for the campaign by people of African descent demanding reparations for the crimes of slavery and colonialism, except that Marx rightly critiqued the gangster philosophy of Jeremy Bentham who suggested that everyone was a calculating philistine, maximising profits and minimising loss, like the bourgeoisie, without regard to morality (Marx, 1954: 609–610). In other words, the demand for reparations is not a search for profits from slavery by people of African descent but a search for justice that would be incomprehensible to the utilitarian Bentham who saw the common people as objects to be manipulated with carrots and sticks instead of recognising them as active subjects who are making their own principled history. As Cesaire

put this with his compelling poetic prose that says a lot about criminology without any need to name the discipline:

Security? Culture? The rule of law? In the meantime, I look around and wherever there are colonizers and colonized face to face, I see force, brutality, cruelty, sadism, conflict, and, in a parody of education, the hasty manufacture of a few thousand subordinate functionaries, “boys”, artisans, office clerks, and interpreters necessary for the smooth operation of business. . . Between the colonizer and colonized there is room only for forced labor, intimidation, pressure, the police, taxation, theft, rape, compulsory crops, contempt, mistrust, arrogance, self-complacency, swinishness, brainless elites, degraded masses. (Cesaire, 1972: 21)

### **Decolonising criminological orientalism**

It is known that, unlike any location in Metropolitan Europe, the colonial locations were regarded collectively by Orientalist scholarship as places characterised by lawlessness and chaos, “inhabited by various despotic governments and roving bands of thugs and bandits. . . troubled by a history of bribery and corruption, which served as poor imitations of civil jurisprudence” (Harlow and Carter, 1999: 67). This ideological justification of British rule in terms of moral superiority was the forerunner of academic criminology which passed in those days under the interdisciplinary field of Orientalism (Said, 1978, 1993). Even Karl Marx, in an article published in the *New York Daily Tribune* of 25 June, 1853, “The British Rule in India”, excused the “vilest interests” that motivated the crimes of the East India Company and the “stupid means” by which those vile crimes were committed by the British, on the basis that England was an unwitting catalyst for essential social revolution in India. Marx argued that, partly due to earlier conquests, there were feudal classes in India that oppressed the masses before British colonialism emerged. He reasoned that the struggle against colonialism in India would be part of the struggle against oriental despotism in Hindustan (Marx and Engels, 1974: 36–37).

Rodney (1972) debunked the ideological excuse that colonialism was essential for African development when every available evidence pointed to the underdevelopment of Africa through the increasing loss of control by Africans over the conditions of their life. The opposition of Africans to European rule and how they were suppressed by superior force, not superior enlightenment, are documented by Rodney and Fanon (among others) with emphasis on the minority class of African collaborators who wanted to maintain the unequal relationship between Europe and Africa for their selfish goals. In

conclusion, Rodney observed that under the colonial situation, law and order meant the maintenance of conditions suitable for the effective expatriation of the surpluses produced by the colonised. Rodney (1972) reasoned that it was curious that Europeans justified colonialism on the excuse that they were morally opposed to the slave trade that they themselves had enthusiastically created, although they were more critical of the Arab slave trade than the European equivalent. Even backward European countries like Portugal felt morally superior to Africa and justified its rule in terms of the need to civilise the dark continent by offering what it called "*Illuminismo*" or Enlightenment while genocidists like King Leopold of Belgium presided over the massacre of millions of Africans to enforce forced labour as a civilising process. The dishonesty of the Europeans became obvious when they started deposing rulers in Africa like King Jaja who were no longer trading in slaves but who insisted that they should be in control of the legitimate trade in raw materials.

Du Bois (1992: 631–34), in *Black Reconstruction in America*, noted how the leaders of America supported colonization in Africa as a way of getting rid of free African Americans to make it easier to justify the enslavement of the rest in America. He went on to demonstrate that colonization was the preferred solution to the color problem because the advocates of colonization knew that the colonized would remain enslaved through the combined forces of finance capital, privileged workers, scientists and engineers. Although Du Bois (one of the founding fathers of conflict criminology) did not specify the scientists who rallied to the service of colonialism after the abolition of slavery, he left little doubt that criminologists were among the "wisest men of science" who defended the new oligarchy. They used the social Darwinist ideology of the "Survival of the Fittest" (the so-called criminal anthropology that won Lombroso, the father of positivist criminology, the French Legion Medal of Honor) to prove that African Americans and white women, like Africans and Asians, were unfit to have self-determination through universal suffrage. This was justified by the fact that European countries were bearing what Rudyard Kipling called the *white man's burden* of enlightening white women, Native Americans, Aborigines, Africans and Asians. In his inimitable lyrical style, Du Bois concluded that the tragic outcome of the collusion of science with colonialism was that:

God wept; but that mattered little to an unbelieving age; what mattered most was that the world wept and still is weeping and blind with tears and blood. For there began to rise in America in 1876 a new capitalism and a new enslavement of labor. Home labor in cultured lands, appeased and misled by a ballot whose power the dictatorship of vast capital strictly curtailed, was bribed by high wage and political office to unite in an exploitation of white, yellow, brown and black labor, in lesser

lands and “breeds without the law.” . . . The immense profit from this new exploitation and world-wide commerce enabled a guild of millionaires to engage the greatest engineers, the wisest men of science, as well as pay high wage to the more intelligent labor and at the same time to have left enough surplus to make more thorough the dictatorship of capital over the state and over the popular vote, not only in Europe and America but in Asia and Africa. (1992: 634)

Soon enough, the same criminological justifications used to rationalise imperialism were imported back to the metropole to justify the repressive control of the working classes, especially the equally colonised Irish. Even in those days, voices were heard challenging the authenticity of orientalist criminology in terms of moral superiority. As George Bernard Shaw (1938) told his English audience, every available evidence points to the moral and intellectual superiority of the Irish who are ruled by the British on the basis of superior force rather than superior enlightenment. Cesaire (1972: 13–14) highlights how the violence, rape, torture and repression of the colonised in the name of civilisation spreads back to Europe like a gangrene of savagery. As he puts it:

People are surprised, they become indignant. They say: “How strange! But never mind – it’s Nazism, it will pass!” And they wait, and they hope; and they hide the truth from themselves, that it is barbarism, but the supreme barbarism, the crowning barbarism that sums up all the daily barbarisms; that it is Nazism, yes, but that before they were its victims, they were its accomplices, that they tolerated that Nazism before it was inflicted on them, that they absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it, because, until then, it had been applied only to non-European peoples; that they have cultivated that Nazism, that they are responsible for it, and that before engulfing the whole of Western, Christian civilization in its reddened waters, it oozes, seeps, and trickles from every crack. (Cesaire, 1972: 14)

This paper introduces readers to my book (Agozino, 2003) that surveys recent developments in criminology and demonstrates how imperialism used criminological knowledge and how imperialism can be seen as a criminological project – imprisonment with or without walls, a widening of the net of incarceration, and how this close kinship between the two fields of knowledge and power, criminology and imperialism, served both of them mutually. The paper examines reasons why conventional criminologists are overwhelmingly silent about the more than coincidental origin of their discipline at the height of European colonialism. The paper will also explore the possibility that the mechanical solidarity between colonialism and criminology is part of the

reason why few post-colonial territories today have developed criminology as an institutionalised discipline. The paper hopefully helps to develop *Counter Colonial Criminology* – a theory of social control from the point of view of anti-imperialist scholars who are familiar with the history of resistance to colonialist (including the colonial, post-colonial, neo-colonial, internal-colonial and re-colonial) law and order reasoning. The paper hopes to encourage a survey of the major epochal moments in criminology especially since the 1960s and indirectly illuminates the colonialist conditions that created changes in criminological theory from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Criminology emerged as a discipline for disciplining and controlling the Other at a time that colonial administrations imprisoned most parts of the earth. The paper will help us to revise existing criminological knowledge by exposing what was hidden by the carceral imperialist logic that produced earlier texts and by charting the potential consequences for criminology when its violent colonial heritage becomes exposed.

I assume that readers are familiar with the Enlightenment philosophers, and the founding fathers of criminology. The focus here in what follows is on the reactions of more recent thinkers to the hidden colonialists assumptions of the dominant schools in criminological theory. Beginning from the labelling perspective and moving through radical criminology and its disintegration into left realism, critical criminology, feminist perspectives and post-structuralist thinkers, the survey presented in the book will help to explain why the discipline of criminology developed largely in the centers of colonialist power and why the neo-colonial regimes have tended to be slow in developing the discipline of criminology. With Africa and other post-colonial locations as examples, it is important to note how relevant or limiting existing criminological knowledge is and how much scholars interested in crime and justice systems would need to be creative in order to come to terms with the reality of counter colonial thought under neo-colonialism. Given the crucial importance of (cultural) imperialism in the history of knowledge in all parts of the world (Said, 1993), one would need to explain why the field of criminology is dominated by scholars in former colonial centers of authority and how such colonialist domination of the field leads to theoretical underdevelopment through the concealment of the bloody legacy of colonialist criminology. One would also need to compare criminological theories and methods according to whether they are pro-imperialist or anti-imperialist in orientation in order to show what criminology has been missing by ignoring marginalised voices of the other in its institutional development or what criminology could learn from anti colonial struggles.

A few historians of law and a few criminologists have looked at the repressive militaristic policing of the colonised (Sumner, 1990; Van Onselen,



1976; Fitzpatrick, 1980; Shivji, 1982; Hall et al., 1978) but hardly any of them has demonstrated the legacy of imperialist reasoning within criminological theories of different shades and explored (with the exception of writers who are not trained in criminology or law such as Fanon, 1963; Nkrumah, 1968; Rodney, 1972; Hochschild, 1998) the possibility of punishing the crimes of slavery and colonialism through reparation or restorative justice. Outside the social sciences, the critique of imperialism is even better established in literary criticism where Achebe (1975, 1988, 1996), Ngugi (1986) and many others have contributed to the canon of post-colonial literature. Wole Soyinka's Nobel Lecture was a counter colonial criminological discourse of the finest quality that is sadly rare among scholars trained in criminology (Soyinka, 1988). These critical scholars are usually different in orientation compared to the modernization and liberal legalism schools of what Cohen (1988) called "made-for-export criminology". The irony is that the modernization theorists such as Clinard and Abbott (1973) and Clifford (1974), come from countries with high crime rates with the assumption that they could teach countries with lower crime rates how to solve the crime problem. Their solution is usually in the form of adopting Western crime control models without any evidence that those models have helped to reduce crime in their own countries. Clinard and Abbott (1973: 275–78) even recommended that Third World countries should adopt the apartheid pass law system as a way to reduce urban crime by controlling the population more rigorously. Apart from the fact that such pass laws have since been recognised as part of the crimes against humanity called apartheid, there is abundant evidence that they did not reduce "crime" in South Africa as hundreds of black women were arrested and jailed in their irrepressible mass defiance of such laws. Cohen (1988) cautions left-wing critics of modernization criminology because they could easily fall into a trap by suggesting that current levels of crime in the Third world are inevitable consequences of capitalist development, suggesting that by following Frantz Fanon's third way instead of trying to create another Europe, the Third World might discover better answers to the crime problem. The Western crime control models are the types of criminology that Cohen is against especially when exported to the Third World uncritically. It could be the case that one of the reasons why Third World countries have neglected the development of criminology is due to the lack of relevance of much of conventional criminology to the reality of the Third World.

This paper hopes to serve as an introductory contribution to *Counter Colonial Criminology* and to comparative criminological theory and comparative methodology for anti-imperialist scholarship interested in developing teaching and research in the enormous criminological crisis facing the post-colonised at home and in the Diaspora. In pointing at factors that may have

facilitated the globalisation of European systems of justice and thought, the paper aims to be of interest to those promoting law reform by serving as a warning against the uncritical adoption of colonialist assumptions of law and order as the best policy option for justice systems in neo-colonial countries. Alternatives to colonialist law and order reasoning are needed that will contribute to the increased democratisation of civil society in the world. However, the main point I would hereby like to make is not that criminological knowledge would ever be enough to change the dreadful conditions of African masses, for example. The paper seeks to demonstrate what criminologists can learn from the struggle of the masses and not necessarily what the masses can learn from criminology. The question is less what criminology can do for the struggle and more what the struggle can do for criminology. Many of the problems confronting governance and social justice in the post colonial world have criminological roots and implications but there is no concerted effort towards finding solutions to such problems from criminological perspectives. At the same time, there are many Third World criminologists who attend meetings and congresses of the American Society of Criminology, the Deviance and Social Control Research Committee of the International Sociological Association, International Criminological Association, Australia and New Zealand Society of Criminology and the British Criminology Association regularly. In addition, some criminologists also attend the African Studies Association meetings but a serious study of the links of criminology with imperialism remains to be done. During the XV World Congress of Sociology in Brisbane, Australia, July 2002, I presented ideas in this paper on a panel that I chaired and I was not surprised to hear criminologists from the Third World and Australia, Europe or North America agreeing with the thesis of the paper – that it is a puzzle that former colonising countries monopolise the teaching of criminology today due to the roots of criminology in colonialism.

The theme of the 1999 Toronto Meeting of the American Society of Criminology was “The Globalization of Criminological Knowledge” but sadly the discipline remained underdeveloped in Africa, Asia and South America with the relative exception of few countries like South Africa and Egypt where conventional criminology was institutionalised as a technical service to repressive social control agencies. The theme of the 1999 African Studies Association meeting in Philadelphia was “Listening to African Perspectives” but the meeting had only one panel on the history of incarceration in Africa and few of the presenters laid claim to an African or even a criminological perspective. This paper would challenge interested scholars and researchers around the world to sustain a program of teaching and research activities aimed at developing criminological knowledge and expertise in and about

Africa, the African Diaspora and the Third World in general for the benefit of Local and Global Peace and Justice. Problems impeding the development of democracy in both former colonial and former colonized countries are related to criminological issues and criminological knowledge could be advanced by engaging with the urgent task of the democratisation of civil society institutions. By supporting the multidisciplinary and comparative study of crime and justice (broadly defined), this paper would help to promote diversity in criminological theory by attracting international scholars and students to the discipline. Moreover, by promoting the study of *Counter Colonial Criminology*, the paper hopes to encourage criminology students to learn from the experiences of post-colonial countries, different ways of dealing with the crime problem and their implications for criminological research and criminological theory. Evidence for the underdeveloped state of criminology in Africa, for example, can be found in Elmer H. Johnson (1983) *International Handbook of Contemporary Developments in Criminology: Europe, Africa, The Middle East, and Asia*, Westport, Greenwood Press. The editorial has chapters on Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa and Uganda. Although this descriptive and a-theoretical publication is almost 20 years old, there is no evidence that criminology has been developed further in African universities since the 1980s but there is abundant evidence of the increasing crime and other social problems facing Africa. The chapters in the International Handbook simply describe the teaching of criminological courses as parts of courses on state security (South Africa), prison administration (Ghana and Uganda), and police training (Egypt and Nigeria) without any reflection on the development of theoretical orientations suitable for explaining post-colonial crime and justice in Africa and without commenting on South America. This paper is a first step to challenge existing criminological theory with the evidence from colonial and post-colonial history and thereby develop a new criminological theory of post-colonial authority and social control. This paper would not be a contribution to another textbook for a police college because we already have many handbooks for police colleges in post-colonial locations even without the institutionalisation of criminology as an autonomous discipline. Again, *Counter Colonial Criminology* would not dwell on prison administration but on a broad critique of the imperialist reason implicit in such administrative criminologies. Whereas almost every university in America offers degrees in criminology or criminal justice from a largely administrative and uncritical orientation, there is no single such department in the numerous universities in Africa, the Caribbean, Asia and South America. Students of Sociology are usually offered one course on the Sociology of deviance and Social Control as part of their Bachelors degrees. If they wished to do post-graduate studies in criminology, they would be

taught and supervised by professors who are unlikely to specialise in criminology. Is this because corrupt post-colonial policy makers are scared that criminologists would conduct research to expose their misdeeds and encourage a punitive attitude to fraud instead of treating it simply as civil wrong to be settled through a mere refund of embezzled funds, if at all? If the reason for lethargy towards the institutionalisation of criminology in post-colonial locations is fear of exposure, then it is irrational because there is no evidence that administrative academic criminology has been responsible in any country for exposing imperialist corruption – that is usually the job of often marginalised critical journalists and organic intellectuals.

### **Conclusion**

One reaction to this paper is to ask whether criminology is worth promoting in the Third World given its conspiracy with imperialism. Should Third World students be encouraged to study the science with which their countries were subjugated for centuries? Should we not follow Stan Cohen (1988) and argue against the exportation of Western criminology's repressive technologies to the Third World and should we not follow the example of Carol Smart (1990) who argued that the eggs of feminism are too large to be fitted into the repressive basket of criminology? In answer to these questions, I will like to present a popular African proverb from the radically democratic Igbo culture that heroically resisted colonisation in Nigeria. The proverb goes by way of a short story that Chinua Achebe retells with his legendary mastery of the narrative arts. The story goes like this: Once upon a time, the animal kingdom called a general meeting to discuss urgent matters (the way the Igbo still do). On their way to the public meeting, the animals were surprised to see the chicken heading in the opposite direction. When asked if he had not heard of the general meeting, the chicken replied that he had some urgent matter of his own to attend to but that he was in full support of whatever decision that would be reached at the public meeting. It turned out that the only item on the agenda was the way human beings were terrorising the animals by using them as sacrificial offerings to their gods. The animals concluded that a diplomatic solution was better than all out war. They suggested that one animal should be offered to human beings as their preferred sacrificial offering to save the rest of the animal kingdom. Guess who was offered to the humans? The chicken, of course, since he had already pledged his allegiance to any decision reached at the meeting in his absence. The lesson of the story is that Third World countries should not chicken out of the general meeting of criminologists or they would remain the sacrificial offering to the gods of imperialism.

All known administrative, empiricist and descriptive accounts of the invisibility of criminology in post-colonial locations serve to justify a more rigorous attempt to theorise the genealogy of criminology from the family tree of colonialism. We therefore need to develop critical scholarship in criminology to avoid the stultifying influence of the imperialist logic that sees criminology only in terms of police training, security agency and prison administrations especially in post-colonial universities. The silence on the genealogical links of criminology with colonialism has produced two adverse effects: a) criminological theory has been constrained by the shackles of imperialist reason and, b) post-colonial countries have generally shunned criminology as an irrelevant colonialist pastime even while continuing to import the nuts and bolts of “made-for-export” imperialist technology. Both these consequences of the failure of the criminological imagination when it comes to colonialism need to be addressed in order to begin and further the decolonisation of criminology for the good of all. One immediate consequence of the decolonisation model is that criminologists will no longer focus exclusively on the punishment of individual offenders but will join the millions of people around the world who are demanding reparations for the crimes of the African holocaust otherwise known as the European Trans Atlantic Slavery, the genocide against native Americans, Aboriginal Australians and the Maori in New Zealand, the crimes against humanity known as Apartheid, the Arab slave trade, the stolen generations of Aboriginal children, the colonial pogroms in Africa, Palestine, Asia and South America and the crimes of the Japanese colonial adventures in Asia. Such tasks will no longer be abandoned to journalists like Chang (1997) who opened the eyes of the world to the Nanking massacre while criminologists turned a blind eye. As Cohen (1993) and the Schwendingers (1970) have been harping in the wilderness, human rights crimes are also criminological problems that should no longer be left out of fat volumes that pretend to be comprehensive handbooks of criminology. Another consequence would be the establishment of Third World schools of theoretical criminology that could teach the West one or two things about crime. It is no longer credible for the imperialist countries who have the greatest crime problems and who perpetrate the greatest crimes to continue to posture as the standard-bearers of criminology from which the Third World should learn. There is an English proverb that you should set a thief to catch a thief but I have never trusted this proverb since I read it in the primary school. I have always suspected that the imperialist thieves would join hands and conspire to rob you blind. I am sure that Western criminologists could learn a thing or two by humbling themselves to listen to Other perspectives. Willem de Haan (1992) stated that there is a need for “progressive criminology” to be indigenised in the Third World but he warned

that such a project should not proceed along the line of extreme cultural relativism lest it perpetuates stereotypes of the other. This paper suggests that it is not enough to indigenise already existing criminological schools, including progressive criminologies. Instead, western criminologists should remain open to chances of learning from the experiences and struggles of others as well through an exchange of knowledge contrary to the modernist assumption that technology must be transferred from the west to the rest of us.

Finally, let me end with the humorous tale of “insulting the meat” that Giddens (1994) cited in his essay on what it means to live in a post-traditional society. According to him, the !Khun San Africans who live in the Kalahari desert where game must be scarce, developed a technology with which to keep the ego of skilled hunters in check, lest they become proud and begin to will domination over others. According to ethnographic reports, the hunter gets home and sits by the fireplace silently and humbly. Everyone ignores him at first and then someone casually asks him if he saw any game today. The hunter is expected to snob himself and say that he is not a skilled hunter, that he did not see anything, perhaps only a very small one. Then the audience would smile and know that he must have caught a big one, otherwise why did he not bring it home by himself. The following day, a party will set out with him to bring home the “small” catch. On the way back, everyone will be insulting the meat and telling the hunter off for dragging them all the way from home just to collect a pile of bones. The hunter will keep apologising that he is really no good at hunting and that he is still learning. Westerners are more likely to boast about their big catch. In line with that African tradition in humility which, like every tradition, was invented at some point, I apologise to my readers for the dry words that I have dragged them out here to read. As you can see, I am no good at writing and I am still learning the craft. Maybe, I have learned a little bit already but I hope to keep learning so that some day I will write my big opus. As you must have guessed, this African tradition is now part of the best social science research in the guise of limitations of findings and recommendations for future research. The major limitation of this paper is that most of the claims in it have not been empirically investigated due to the limitation of funding available at the time of writing. Hopefully, research like this will be more generously funded and more empirically tested in the future. However, it is inexcusable to wait for generous funding before attempting to write something like this.

## Note

1. My paraphrase of the epigraph to Kwame Nkrumah's *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* quoted from V.I. Lenin's *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*. For criminology, read finance capital and for groups of scholars, read nation States in the original. Thanks to the USRC Fellowship Grant of IUP that allowed me to visit the colonial history archives at Syracuse University for one week to find more evidence with which to support my argument and for the International Conference Grant for the International Sociological Association World Congress, Brisbane, Australia where an earlier version of this paper was presented, July 2002. A version of this paper serves as the introduction to my book, *Counter-Colonial Criminology: A Critique of Imperialist Reason* (London, Pluto Press, 2003).

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