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Positivism and Neo-Positivism



7.1 Questions

1. To what extent does Toynbee's challenge and response theory explain the rise and fall of pre-colonial African states.
2. Discuss the applicability of Challenge and response schema in historical thought.

7.2 The Challenge and Response Theory of the Rise and Fall of World Civilizations

7.2.1 Civilizations

Civilizations are not held to have a fixed life cycle, though they do go through similar phases for example times of trouble, the succession of internal proletariats and loss of creativity rites.

Civilizations are distinguished by their dynamism, having arisen from pre-existing society when a sufficiently threatening challenge evoked a creative response. Thus Egyptian civilization originated when the challenge of drought provoked response the development of irrigation and water management procedures and the Minoan role to the opportunity presented by the challenge of its island situation.

The optimum civilization producing challenge has to be great enough to call forth a qualitatively new response, but not so great to be entirely crushing the challenge – response scheme is supposed to explain not only origins but subsequent growth, through the later challenges may be more external, for instance the need for unified political institutions to match the cultural and economic unity of ancient Greece.

Through there is no necessary limit to the number of challenges that can be successfully met, in fact in al civilization except possibly our won creativity has failed and breakdown or ossification occurred.

Toynbee was perhaps initially motivated by a desire to predict the future of western civilization, but developed a reluctance to draw pessimistic conclusions, and turned his attention to quasi religious questions about the final purpose of mankind. Toynbee theory is a species of imaginative literature, expressing and evoking reflections about human destiny and ultimate values.

7.3 Joseph Arnold Toynbee 1889

He was educated at Balliol College, Oxford between 1912 and 1915; he was fellow tutor at the same college. In 1919, he participated in the Peace Treaty of Versailles, which ended the First World War. From 1924 he became a Professor of Byzantine and modern Greek language, and literature at the Berlin University of London.

From 1925 to 1955, he acted as director of studies in the royal institute of international affairs and research at the same university. He authored many books; the most important is “*A Study of History*.” In the book Toynbee discusses civilization, he claimed, he could discern study. He came up with the idea that all civilization exhibit common features. Therefore, he argues that “only at the level of a whole civilization, can the events of national histories become really intelligible, thus the history of great Britain cannot be written without constant reference to what was going on in the continent of Europe.”

Toynbee then went ahead to invent universal history of civilization. He argues that the history of any fully developed civilization goes through five

phase's such as; rise Growth, breakdown, disintegration and rise of universal state.

He argues that civilization is a constant process of development, and therefore for a civilization to arise, it has to meet the challenges posed by human and environmental challenges. He came up with the theory of challenge and response. Primitive societies are static; they do not develop because they do not face challenges. This is opposed to the new that civilization arises naturally out of favorable conditions.

The Egyptian civilization “originated in the lower Nile valley, when faced by the progressive desertification of the African grassland, a primitive society instead of moving south and keeping its way of life intact, set to work to drain the valley marshes”

The desire to conquer the harsh environment is what helped the growth of Egyptian civilization. This is also what led to their civilizations for example Minoan and Sumerian civilizations.

If a challenge is too weak to provoke a response, no civilization will arise. Alternatively if the challenge is too severe it will lead to an abortive civilization e.g. the Viking civilization collapsed because of server natural ice (occur in Iceland and Greenland). He argues “civilizations are responses to mean or optimum challenges which means civilizations occur where there is moderate challenges, not too server or too weak.”

Civilizations grow (rise) in response to a series of challenges in a dialectic manner. He argues that after a challenge is met with optimum response, the societal equilibrium is altered to raise further complaints. This encourages the development to continue. The continuity of development is guided by certain prepared groups in the community which is usually the minority. If the society

by the help of the minority leads is able to progress past this stage, it will then be in a position to advance to the next stage. If the leaders are unable to meet the tempo of the challenge the civilization will be arrested.

The minority groups are prepared by withdrawal and return to the society, and return with the challenge to the society. In the arrest state, the leaders who are the minority lack creativity and exhaust their spiritual resources, this forces their members who are the majority to withdraw their alliance. This ushers in the third phase of the development.

If the leaders have failed to maintain the tempo of development, their society is not prepared to meet the challenges. This leads to chaos for the challenges become too severe for the society to meet and this leads to the breakdown of civilization. This period is usually long, since people do not drive you easily and they continue to perpetually try to overcome the challenges.

Some communities have been able to overcome this breakdown, while others have been unable to offer positive response to the positive civilization, Toynbee argues that this breakdown happens because the leaders impose their rule on the citizens who do not have confidence in them.

Some citizens thus withdraw from the state leading to its final disintegration. He says the remnants may continue to exist as fossils in the bodies of successors for example Parsees in India and the Jewish community. It goes through a rhythm of rout rally rout, which means, she faces reoccurring challenges that she is unable to meet. The final phase is the rise of universal state.

Through the experiences of the internal proletariats that higher religious arise due to responses, through the suffering and breakdown or disintegration of civilizations. This makes man to progress in the knowledge of god, thus leading to the rise of universal relation. The religion is a major unifying factor when

people are faced with chaos. Toynbee says Christianity which is universal religion gave birth to Western civilization. Islam as a universal religion gave birth to Asiatic civilization. He says “civilizations evolve like branches of a tree, branching and shaped by spiritual forces”

Examples pre-colonial African states are Bunyoro Kitara kingdom, Buganda kingdom, the Maasai, the Nandi, empire of Songhai, Mali and Ghana.

7.4 Factors that Contributed to the Rise of Empires

1. Competent, determined and able leaders – Koitalel Samoei, Samouri Toure, Mirambo among others.
2. Trade – revenue – arm soldiers-motivate, equip feed and maintain.
3. Political organization; centralized/heredity Buganda (Kabaka) Asante (Asantehene).
4. Military organizations – proscription into the army military treaties – cow horn-short stabbing spear – guerilla tarsus – Scorched earth policy.
5. Modern arms – expansion.
6. Iron – working – superior weapons.
7. Religious – unity – Muslim Jihads.
8. Decline of other empire – Bunyoro Kitara, Buganda.
9. Symbols of unity reach – golden stool, festivities Asante.
10. Hereditary political stability.
11. Taxation levies revenue.

7.4.1 Optimum Challenges

1. Good climate – Buganda – fertile soils – enough food sustain military.
2. Trade – neighbors – arable/Swahili.
3. Acquisition of guns – Buganda/Asante/ Madera.
4. Weapons to expand.
5. Political stability – hereditary kingship no successive dispute.
6. Geographical position – hilly over deviance purposes.
7. Weak neighbors no challenge.
8. Ambitious leaders.
9. Loyalty of the king – divine leadership.

7.4.2 Factors that Contributed Fall of States

1. Collaboration with colonialist's coastal kingdom French Dahomey.
2. Lack of revenue arms ammunition.
3. Asante did not resist incoming forces.
4. Too weak no response.
5. Occupation of other kingdoms superior arms.
6. Treaties Africans not literate Jaja of Opobo, Lenana.
7. Expedition by European powers.
8. Natural calamities drought, famine, lethal epidemics, scramble/position of Africa Berlin conference.
9. Maasai-series of civil wars weakening them.

10. Slave trade-under populated.

11. Colonialism.