

A Clash of Worlds: Deconstructing Cultural Conflict and the Erosion of Positive Peace in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

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Abstract

This article undertakes an interdisciplinary analysis of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, examining the profound cultural conflict depicted through the lens of Positive Peace theory. By mapping the pre-colonial Igbo societal structures against Johan Galtung's Eight Pillars of Positive Peace, the study identifies inherent elements of peaceful coexistence. It then deconstructs how European colonialism systematically dismantled these pillars, leading to the erosion of societal resilience and the collapse of traditional order. The novel serves as a powerful literary case study, illustrating how the imposition of foreign systems and ideologies constitutes not merely an absence of direct violence (negative peace) but a fundamental destruction of the attitudes, institutions, and structures that sustain a just and harmonious society (positive peace). The research reveals that despite certain internal complexities, pre-colonial Igbo society exhibited a robust framework for Positive Peace, which was systematically undermined by colonial intervention, leading to widespread social fragmentation, individual despair, and the tragic demise of its protagonist. This analysis contributes to both postcolonial literary studies and peace studies by offering a nuanced understanding of cultural conflict as a process of Positive Peace erosion, highlighting the long-term consequences of imperialistic encounters.

Key Words: Positive Peace, conflict, colonial intervention, fragmentation

Introduction

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, published in 1958, stands as a seminal work in African literature, widely recognized for its ground-breaking portrayal of pre-colonial Igbo society and the devastating impact of European colonialism. Achebe penned the novel as a direct response to prevailing European narratives that often depicted Africans as "savages" in need of enlightenment, offering instead a rich and nuanced depiction of Igbo history, complete with its strengths and imperfections. The narrative meticulously explores the inherent tension between tradition and the forces of change, particularly focusing on the profound disruption of Igbo culture and its deeply held values.

Complementing this literary analysis, the concept of "Positive Peace," popularized by peace theorist Johan Galtung, extends beyond the mere absence of direct violence, often termed "negative peace". Positive Peace encompasses the active presence of attitudes, institutions and structures that collectively create and sustain peaceful societies. It is understood as a preventative and just form of peace, striving to establish conditions where all individuals within a society can genuinely thrive. The Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) has further refined this concept by identifying eight empirically derived "Pillars of Positive Peace": Well-functioning Government, Sound Business Environment, Equitable Distribution of Resources and Acceptance of the Rights of Others, Good Relations with Neighbours, Free Flow of Information, High Levels of Human Capital and Low Levels of Corruption.

This article posits that *Things Fall Apart* functions as a compelling literary case study, vividly illustrating the systematic erosion of Positive Peace within pre-colonial Igbo society due to the pervasive intrusion of colonialism. The novel demonstrates that the "clash of worlds" was not simply a confrontation involving physical force but a profound dismantling of the very foundations of societal well-being and harmony that had long sustained the Igbo people.

While extensive literary criticism exists on *Things Fall Apart*, its depiction of cultural conflict and the pervasive effects of colonialism, there remains a notable gap in interdisciplinary analysis that systematically applies the specific, empirically derived framework of Positive Peace Pillars. Existing scholarly work often addresses "peace" in a general sense or focuses on "negative peace" (the absence of direct violence) rather than the comprehensive, multi-dimensional framework of Positive Peace. This more granular approach allows for a deeper understanding of the societal conditions *before* and *after* the colonial encounter. The novel's portrayal of a complex, functioning society prior to the arrival of Europeans provides a unique opportunity to analyse the presence of Positive Peace components. Unlike much Peace Studies research that focuses on *building* peace post-conflict, *Things Fall Apart* allows for an examination of its *erosion*. This methodological approach offers a novel contribution, bridging a gap where literary analysis can inform peace theory by providing a detailed historical and cultural case study of how peace, beyond mere absence of violence, existed and was systematically dismantled. It shifts the analytical focus from merely "what was broken" (negative peace) to a more profound understanding of "what was lost" (positive peace).

Objectives

- To analyse the pre-colonial Igbo society as depicted in *Things Fall Apart*, mapping its characteristics against the Eight Pillars of Positive Peace to identify inherent elements of societal well-being and resilience.
- To deconstruct how European colonialism, through its imposition of foreign religion, governance, and economic systems, systematically undermined and ultimately dismantled these identified Pillars of Positive Peace in Igbo society.
- To explore the implications of this erosion of Positive Peace on individual identity and communal cohesion, as exemplified by the tragic trajectory of Okonkwo.
- To contribute to an interdisciplinary dialogue between postcolonial literary studies and peace studies, demonstrating the utility of literary texts as rich case studies for understanding complex peace and conflict dynamics.

Significance:

The significance of this study lies in its interdisciplinary approach to Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, combining literary analysis with peace and conflict theory to provide a deeper understanding of how cultural conflict contributes to the erosion of what Johan Galtung terms "positive peace." While *Things Fall Apart* is widely recognized as a foundational postcolonial text, this study moves beyond its historical and literary context to highlight its relevance in contemporary discussions about peacebuilding, cultural preservation, and decolonization.

By deconstructing the cultural clashes between the Igbo society and British colonial forces, this analysis underscores how external domination not only disrupts political structures but also fractures indigenous systems of justice, spiritual life, and social harmony. This loss extends beyond physical violence, touching on the erasure of identity and the internal fragmentation of communities—issues still prevalent in many postcolonial societies today.

Literary Criticism on *Things Fall Apart*: Colonialism, Culture and Peace

Chinua Achebe's seminal novel is widely acclaimed for its powerful critique of European imperialism and its celebration of the richness and complexity of African cultures. Achebe's primary motivation for writing the novel was to educate readers about the inherent value of African culture and history, directly challenging the prevalent European misrepresentations that often depicted Africans as primitive or uncivilized. He achieved this by presenting Igbo society with a balanced view, highlighting both its strengths and its imperfections, thereby moving beyond simplistic and often derogatory portrayals.

Scholarly analyses of, *Things Fall Apart* consistently recognises its exploration of African identity and the profound impact of European colonialism. Critics have extensively examined the novel's depiction of the "clash of cultures" and the subsequent struggle for personal and communal identity that ensues. This clash is characterized by the systematic imposition of foreign religion, language, and legal systems, which fundamentally dismantled traditional Igbo practices and institutions. The narrative centres on Okonkwo, whose personal struggles and eventual demise are widely interpreted as symbolic of the broader disintegration of traditional Igbo societal values and, ultimately, the "death of a culture".

Foundational Concepts in Peace Studies

The field of Peace Studies provides crucial theoretical frameworks for understanding conflict and peace. A fundamental distinction, popularized by Johan Galtung, is between "negative peace" and "positive peace". Negative peace is narrowly defined as the mere absence of direct violence or war. In contrast, positive peace is a more comprehensive concept, denoting the presence of social justice, equality, and harmonious social relations within a society. This distinction was anticipated by earlier thinkers such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Jane Addams, who emphasized that true peace, necessitates the presence of justice, not merely the absence of tension.

The empirically derived "Pillars of Positive Peace" as mentioned earlier, offer a holistic framework for measuring societal peacefulness and resilience. Positive Peace is inherently preventative, aiming to cultivate conditions where all individuals can thrive, and it necessitates the development of social cohesion, trust in institutions and strong relationships across various groups within a society.

Peace Studies also categorises violence into three main forms: direct violence (physical harm and war), structural violence (harm resulting from social structures or institutions that prevent people from meeting basic human needs), and cultural violence (aspects of culture that legitimize direct or structural violence). The colonial experience, as vividly portrayed in *Things Fall Apart* embodies all three forms. Colonialism, as described in the novel, introduced a "foreign religion, language, and legal system that systematically dismantle traditional practices", leading to "cultural trauma" and "oppressed social coherence". This indicates that colonialism was not just about direct violence, though that certainly occurred (Okonkwo's hanging). It was a profound act of structural violence, dismantling indigenous governance and economic systems, and cultural violence, devaluing indigenous beliefs and imposing Christianity. This comprehensive assault directly targeted the various pillars of Positive Peace, leading to a complete societal breakdown, not just a temporary conflict. The "clash" is thus understood as a systematic erosion of peace, not merely an event.

Interdisciplinary Gap

While literary studies have extensively explored the cultural conflict and societal breakdown depicted in *Things Fall Apart* and Peace Studies has developed robust frameworks for analysing peace, there is a distinct gap in applying the specific, multi-dimensional framework of Positive Peace Pillars to a detailed literary case study such as Achebe's novel. This interdisciplinary approach offers a novel lens through which to understand the profound depth of colonial impact, moving beyond a general understanding of conflict to reveal the systematic dismantling of a society's inherent well-being and its capacity for sustainable peace.

Theoretical Framework: The Pillars of Positive Peace

Positive Peace, as conceptualized by Johan Galtung, represents a significant departure from the simplistic definition of peace as merely the absence of war or direct violence (negative peace). Instead, it describes an active and dynamic condition characterized by the pervasive presence of attitudes, institutions, and structures that actively foster and sustain peaceful societies. It signifies a societal state where social justice, equality, and harmonious social relations are not just ideals but are actively prevalent and upheld.

The Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) has empirically derived eight interconnected pillars that collectively constitute Positive Peace. These pillars function as robust indicators of a society's resilience and its capacity for enduring peacefulness. These eight pillars are:

- **Well-functioning Government:** This pillar refers to a government that effectively delivers high-quality public and civil services, successfully engenders trust and participation among its citizens, consistently demonstrates political stability, and rigorously upholds the rule of law.
- **Sound Business Environment:** This encompasses strong economic conditions complemented by formal institutions that robustly support the operation of the

private sector. It contributes significantly to overall business competitiveness and economic productivity, both of which are intrinsically linked to the most peaceful nations.

- **Equitable Distribution of Resources:** Peaceful countries tend to ensure fairness in access to essential resources such as education and health services. To a lesser but still significant extent, they also strive for equity in income distribution, mitigating disparities that can lead to social unrest.
- **Acceptance of the Rights of Others:** This pillar involves the enforcement of formal laws that guarantee basic human rights and freedoms. Equally important are the informal social and cultural norms that promote respectful behaviours among citizens, fostering an environment of mutual regard.
- **Good Relations with Neighbours:** Harmonious relations are crucial not only between countries but also among diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural groups within a single nation. Such positive internal and external relations are strongly associated with more peaceful and politically stable societies, often leading to better functioning governments and lower levels of organized internal conflict.
- **Free Flow of Information:** This pillar emphasizes the role of a free and independent media in disseminating information. Such dissemination leads to greater public knowledge, empowering individuals, businesses, and civil society to make more informed decisions and respond more rationally during times of crisis.
- **High Levels of Human Capital:** A skilled human capital base reflects the extent to which societies invest in educating their citizens and promoting the development of knowledge. This investment directly improves economic productivity, enhances care for the young, encourages political participation, and builds strong social capital.
- **Low Levels of Corruption:** Minimal corruption indicates transparency and accountability within governance and economic systems. Its absence fosters trust in institutions and ensures that resources are utilized for the collective good rather than private gain.

These eight pillars provide a comprehensive and empirically grounded framework for assessing the depth of peacefulness and resilience within any given society. By analysing the presence or absence, as well as the relative strength or weakness, of these interconnected pillars, one can effectively gauge a society's inherent capacity for sustainable peace and its corresponding vulnerability to conflict. The pillars are not isolated components but are deeply interdependent. The erosion of one pillar, such as a well-functioning government due to external imposition, will inevitably weaken others, such as the equitable distribution of resources or the acceptance of the rights of others. This interconnectedness means that any significant external impact, like colonialism, can lead to a cascading failure across the entire Positive Peace framework, rendering the societal collapse more profound and potentially irreversible.

Pre Colonial Igbo Society: Foundations of Positive Peace

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* offers a vivid and compelling portrayal of the intricate social hierarchy, customs, and beliefs that characterized the Igbo people prior to the arrival of European intervention. The novel provides an invaluable insider's perspective, directly challenging the Eurocentric narratives that had previously dominated the understanding of African societies. Through this detailed depiction, it becomes evident that pre-colonial Igbo

society possessed a robust framework for Positive Peace, despite certain internal complexities.

Analysis through Positive Peace Pillars:

- Well-functioning Government:** Igbo society operated under a decentralized, communal governance structure, emphasizing consensus and traditional authority rather than a single monarch. Decisions were primarily made through assemblies of elders and titled men, reflecting a participatory form of governance. The oracle also played a significant role in adjudicating legal and religious matters, ensuring adherence to communal norms. This system, though distinct from Western models, fostered community participation and provided established mechanisms for dispute resolution, thereby contributing significantly to societal stability and trust. The observance of the "Week of Peace" before planting season exemplifies an institutionalized practice for maintaining social order and harmony, honouring the earth goddess Ani, whose blessings were considered essential for successful harvests. Okonkwo's punishment for violating this peace by beating his wife underscores the community's collective commitment to upholding these foundational principles of peace.
- Sound Business Environment:** The Igbo economy was predominantly agrarian, with farming serving as its cornerstone. "Yam" symbolized wealth and status, reflecting the society's reliance on agricultural productivity. Social mobility was attainable through personal achievement and diligent work, allowing individuals to rise in status based on their industriousness. Trade networks also existed among the "nine villages," as evidenced by Okonkwo's widespread renown. This emphasis on agricultural productivity and individual achievement within a communal framework fostered economic stability and provided clear pathways for individuals to gain respect and contribute meaningfully to the collective good, aligning with the characteristics of a robust business environment that supports overall societal well-being.
- Equitable Distribution of Resources:** While not strictly egalitarian, the management of resources such as land and harvest was communal, and social status was intricately linked with family ties and personal achievements. The inherently communal nature of farming and the paramount importance of collective well-being suggest a system where basic needs were generally met through shared effort and mutual support. The communal ownership and management of essential resources, coupled with a profound "Serve the Earth" attitude, ensured that the community's sustenance was prioritized, which served to prevent extreme disparities that often precipitate conflict. Happiness, in this context, was largely derived from fulfilling one's responsibilities within the community, thereby contributing to the collective good.
- Acceptance of the Rights of Others:** Igbo culture placed a strong emphasis on communalism, deep respect for tradition, and spiritual beliefs. The "Being-with" philosophy, a core African metaphysical concept, meant that happiness was rooted in harmonious coexistence with other individuals and the natural environment, rather than being tied to individual fulfilment or material wealth. Values such as respect, honesty, and obedience were central to maintaining social harmony. The "Week of Peace" ritual further exemplifies a societal commitment to harmonious relations and a foundational acceptance of collective well-being over purely individualistic pursuits. This "Being-with" philosophy directly supports the pillar's emphasis on informal social and cultural norms that promote respectful behaviours. It is important to acknowledge, however, that Achebe's portrayal also includes certain "imperfections"

within Igbo society, such as the sacrifice of young boys, the killing of twins, and certain forms of oppression of women. These elements, while problematic from a modern human rights perspective, existed within a system that otherwise fostered communal harmony and Positive Peace in its own context. The society also possessed mechanisms for addressing internal issues, such as Okonkwo's exile for an accidental killing. This suggests that pre-colonial Igbo society, while possessing a strong foundation for Positive Peace, was not utopian; its "imperfections" represented internal challenges that the society managed or was evolving through, rather than fundamental flaws that inherently undermined its peace.

- **Good Relations with Neighbours:** The novel's setting across Umuofia and Mbanta, as part of the broader "nine villages," strongly suggests the existence of an established network of interconnected communities. Okonkwo's renowned extending "throughout the nine villages" further implies well-established inter-village communication, mutual recognition, and potentially alliances or shared customs. The presence of such a multi-village system with shared customs and recognized leaders indicates established relations, likely including mechanisms for trade and dispute resolution that collectively fostered regional stability, a critical aspect of good relations with neighbours.
- **Free Flow of Information:** Storytelling, the use of proverbs, and idioms were integral aspects of Igbo culture and served as crucial means of communication and knowledge transfer. Oral traditions were vital for preserving historical narratives, cultural norms, and collective wisdom. Additionally, the oracle served as a significant source of guidance and communal information. An active oral tradition and communal storytelling ensured the widespread dissemination of cultural knowledge, societal norms, and historical context. This shared understanding and established means of communication, alongside the oracle's role, facilitated collective decision-making and problem-solving, thereby contributing significantly to societal coherence and enabling rational responses to challenges.
- **High Levels of Human Capital:** Igbo society educated its citizens through a robust system of oral traditions, practical apprenticeship, and active participation in community life. Essential skills were developed through activities such as farming, craftsmanship, and warfare. The novel particularly highlights the paramount importance of language in preserving these rich oral traditions. This robust system of indigenous knowledge transfer and skill development ensured that individuals were well-equipped to contribute effectively to the community's productivity and social capital, fostering a strong sense of belonging and collective capability.
- **Low Levels of Corruption:** While the novel does not explicitly detail instances of corruption in the modern sense, the communal justice system, the reliance on respected traditional leaders and the oracle, and the strong emphasis on values such as respect and honesty collectively suggest a system designed to maintain order and fairness. Okonkwo's exile for an accidental killing demonstrates the strict adherence to communal law, even when personally inconvenient to a prominent figure, indicating a system where accountability was upheld. The communal enforcement of laws and a strong moral framework, where "what is good among one people is an abomination with others", implies a system where deviations from established norms were addressed, contributing to trust in institutions and a low tolerance for actions that would undermine communal well-being.

The Colonial Onslaught: Erosion and Positive Peace

The arrival of European missionaries and colonial forces in Umuofia marked a profound and devastating turning point for Igbo society. These external forces introduced a foreign religion, language, and legal system that systematically dismantled traditional Igbo practices and institutions. This invasion posed an existential threat, poised to alter nearly every aspect of Igbo society. The colonial impact was not merely a conflict of arms but a multi-faceted assault that systematically eroded the foundations of Positive Peace. Colonialism, as depicted in the novel, brought about structural violence through the dismantling of indigenous governance and economic systems, and cultural violence by devaluing traditional beliefs and imposing new ideologies. This comprehensive assault directly targeted the various pillars of Positive Peace, leading to a profound societal breakdown.

Deconstruction of Erosion through Positive Peace Pillars:

- Disruption of Well-functioning Government:** The colonial government directly and aggressively undermined traditional Igbo authority, systematically replacing respected indigenous leaders with European-appointed officials who often lacked understanding or respect for local customs and justice. They imposed their own legal system, disregarding centuries of indigenous laws and customs. This imposition led to a profound fragmentation, where the clan "no longer acted as one; the clan had fallen apart". This direct intervention constituted a clear act of structural violence, destroying the existing, albeit different, form of well-functioning government. It stripped the community of its agency in self-governance, replaced trust with coercion, and dismantled traditional mechanisms for justice and participation, inevitably leading to political instability and a complete loss of the rule of law from the Igbo perspective.
- Erosion of Sound Business Environment:** While the provided information does not extensively detail specific economic shifts beyond the general threat to "trade", the imposition of a new administrative and legal system inherently altered traditional economic practices. The colonial perspective on a "Sound Business Environment" often prioritized resource exploitation and integration into a global capitalist system designed to benefit the colonizer, rather than fostering indigenous economic strength. The shift from a communal, agrarian economy where "yam is wealth" to one influenced by colonial trade dynamics would inevitably disrupt traditional wealth creation and distribution. This undermined local economic self-sufficiency, replacing it with a system that likely created new forms of dependency and inequality, thereby eroding the indigenous sound business environment.
- Challenge to Equitable Distribution of Resources:** The colonial presence introduced new economic structures and values, frequently prioritizing individual gain and material wealth over the established communal well-being. Although specific details regarding resource distribution are not extensively provided, the overarching shift in societal values would profoundly impact how resources were accessed and shared within the community. By promoting Western concepts of progress and individualism, colonialism directly disrupted the communal ethos that had previously ensured a degree of equitable resource distribution. This new focus on individual accumulation, rather than collective sustenance, would likely lead to increased disparities and a breakdown of traditional support systems, directly undermining this critical pillar of peace.

- **Undermining Acceptance of the Rights of Others:** Christian missionaries actively dismissed Igbo beliefs as "false gods" and "bad customs", imposing an alternative worldview that was inherently demeaning. This aggressive imposition created a deep rift within the community, as some members converted to Christianity and abandoned their ancestral ways. The colonizers' perception of Africans as "uncivilised" and "savage" inherently denied their fundamental rights and cultural validity. The imposition of a foreign religion and the systematic denigration of indigenous beliefs constituted a profound act of cultural violence. This directly attacked the informal social and cultural norms that underpinned the acceptance of diverse practices within Igbo society, leading to severe internal divisions and a pervasive loss of collective identity. The resulting "confused sense of belonging" is a direct consequence of this erosion of societal acceptance.
- **Breakdown of Good Relations with Neighbours:** The colonial presence actively fostered internal divisions within Igbo society. As some members embraced Christianity and Western ways, others staunchly resisted, creating a significant ideological and generational divide. This fracturing of the previously cohesive clan meant that the community could no longer act as a unified entity. The introduction of conflicting ideologies and allegiances created deep rifts both within and between villages, replacing previously harmonious internal relations with suspicion and fragmentation. The loss of shared values and the undermining of traditional authority meant the community could no longer act as one, leading to a breakdown of social cohesion and inter-group trust, which are vital for maintaining this pillar of peace.
- **Impact on Free Flow of Information:** The imposition of a new language and educational system, coupled with the systematic devaluation of indigenous knowledge and oral traditions, severely disrupted the traditional means of information flow within Igbo society. By undermining the authenticity and inherent value of indigenous storytelling, proverbs, and oral history, colonialism effectively stifled the traditional free flow of information. This created a knowledge vacuum and fostered a reliance on colonial narratives, thereby preventing individuals and the community from making informed decisions based on their own cultural context, which significantly weakened their collective resilience.
- **Devaluation of High Levels of Human Capital:** The introduction of Western education and the explicit dismissal of traditional knowledge systems led to a profound devaluation of indigenous human capital. Younger generations, exemplified by Okonkwo's son Nwoye, often embraced new identities and Western ways, directly rejecting traditional Igbo life and its associated knowledge. By promoting Western education as superior and systematically dismissing indigenous knowledge, colonialism devalued the existing human capital within Igbo society. This created a significant disconnects between generations and undermined the traditional pathways for skill development and knowledge transfer, ultimately leading to a pervasive loss of collective identity and purpose.
- **Introduction of Corruption/Lack of Accountability:** The colonial administration, staffed by European-appointed officials, frequently demonstrated a profound lack of understanding or respect for local customs and established justice systems. The District Commissioner, for instance, embodies an external authority that judges Igbo society through an inherently biased and ethnocentric lens. The imposition of an external, unaccountable authority, often perceived as arbitrary or unjust by the Igbo people, introduced a new form of "corruption" in terms of governance that lacked transparency and local legitimacy. This undermined trust in the new system and

eroded the traditional mechanisms of accountability that had previously maintained order, leading to a breakdown of the rule of law from the Igbo perspective.

The "locusts" metaphor in the novel serves as a profound illustration of the insidious nature of Positive Peace erosion. Initially, the villagers "rejoice" at the arrival of locusts, viewing them as a new resource for food. This initial reaction signifies a failure to recognize the subtle yet profound threat to Positive Peace. Unlike direct violence, which is immediately perceived, the erosion of Positive Peace can be subtle at first, even appearing to offer "some benefits to their culture". However, much like the locusts that systematically consume crops, colonialism gradually and thoroughly consumed the underlying structures—the values, traditions, and social cohesion—that sustained Igbo society's peace. This process left behind cultural ruin and a pervasive "confused sense of belonging", highlighting how Positive Peace can be eroded not just through overt conflict but also through the gradual dismantling of its foundational pillars.

Okonkwo's Tragedy: A Symbol of Collapsed Peace

Okonkwo, the central protagonist of *Things Fall Apart*, is meticulously presented as an embodiment of traditional Igbo values. He is a respected leader, a formidable warrior, and a diligent farmer whose success and social standing are intrinsically linked to his achievements and unwavering adherence to cultural norms. His profound sense of identity and personal fulfilment is deeply rooted in his roles within his family and village, reflecting the African philosophy of "Being-with" and the paramount importance of collective well-being within his society.

Okonkwo's personal struggle throughout the novel is emblematic of the broader crisis of identity that grips the entire Igbo people in the face of colonization. His understanding of strength which is firmly rooted in traditional masculine values clashes fundamentally and irreconcilably with the new European ideals of Christianity, education and government. His fierce resistance to change and his ultimate inability to adapt to the rapidly imposed new order vividly reflect the profound disruption of his entire world.

Okonkwo's tragic demise, particularly his suicide, serves as a powerful and poignant symbol of the "death of a culture" and the irreversible end of a centuries-old way of life. His personal downfall directly mirrors the transformation and eventual fragmentation of the broader Igbo community. The clan's indecision and their collective inability to act as one after his final violent act the killing of a kotma underscore the complete breakdown of their collective will and social cohesion, signalling the final collapse of their traditional order.

Okonkwo's tragedy is thus a micro-level manifestation of the macro-level erosion of Positive Peace. His inability to find meaning or function within the new colonial order signifies the collapse of the very pillars that once defined his existence: the "Well-functioning Government" that had granted him status and a clear path for justice was systematically replaced; the "Acceptance of the Rights of Others" (specifically, the rights and beliefs of his own people) was systematically denied; and the "High Levels of Human Capital" that formed his identity as a warrior and farmer were devalued. His profound despair reflects the fundamental loss of the "Being-with" philosophy and the communal happiness it had once fostered. Okonkwo's suicide is not merely a personal failure but a stark symbol of the complete and utter collapse of Positive Peace at the individual level. It signifies a state where thriving is impossible, where communal harmony is shattered, and where an individual's

identity, once derived from a robust social structure, is utterly annihilated. This goes beyond the mere absence of direct violence; it represents the absence of the very conditions for a life worth living, serving as a profound testament to the destructive power of Positive Peace erosion.

Reaffirming the Interdisciplinary Analysis

This article has demonstrated that pre-colonial Igbo society, as meticulously depicted in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, possessed a discernible framework of Positive Peace. This framework was characterized by a well-functioning communal government, an equitable distribution of resources, a strong sense of collective identity and acceptance, established inter-village relations, robust oral traditions, and high levels of indigenous human capital. However, the arrival of European colonialism systematically dismantled these foundational pillars through the imposition of foreign governance, religion, and economic systems, leading to profound structural and cultural violence.

Things Fall Apart thus stands as a powerful narrative illustrating the devastating impact of cultural conflict not merely as an absence of negative peace (direct violence) but as a systematic and comprehensive erosion of Positive Peace. Achebe's work provides a critical counter-narrative to colonial discourses, revealing the inherent peacefulness and resilience of indigenous societies and the catastrophic consequences of its destruction. The novel implicitly argues that the absence of the attitudes, institutions, and structures of Positive Peace creates conditions ripe for continued instability and internal conflict in the post-colonial era. This offers a critical understanding of why many post-colonial nations continue to struggle with governance, equitable resource distribution, and social cohesion; linking these contemporary challenges directly back to the systematic dismantling of indigenous Positive Peace foundations.

Implications for Contemporary Peace Studies and Postcolonial Discourse:

- **Peace Studies:** This study reinforces the enduring importance of Galtung's Positive Peace framework for analysing both historical and on-going conflicts. It highlights that effective peace building efforts must extend beyond merely ceasing hostilities; they must deeply consider and address the underlying cultural and structural foundations of peace within a society. Understanding the erosion of Positive Peace offers crucial insights into the long-term societal trauma and fragmentation that can persist long after direct violence has ceased, influencing generations.
- **Postcolonial Discourse:** The analysis deepens our understanding of colonialism's multifaceted impact, moving beyond a sole focus on political or economic exploitation to encompass the profound destruction of a holistic societal well-being. It underscores the continued relevance of postcolonial literature in providing rich, nuanced case studies that are invaluable for interdisciplinary research, offering perspectives often overlooked in purely historical or political analyses.

Suggestions for Future Research:

- Further interdisciplinary studies could systematically apply the Positive Peace framework to other seminal postcolonial texts from diverse geographical regions. Such comparative analyses could help identify common patterns of peace erosion and resilience in the face of various forms of imperialism.
- Research could explore how contemporary post-colonial societies are attempting to rebuild or re-establish elements of Positive Peace, drawing lessons from indigenous frameworks and philosophies, such as the "Being-with" concept, to inform sustainable peace building strategies.
- A comparative analysis could be undertaken between Achebe's portrayal of Igbo society's internal "imperfections" and its inherent capacity for self-correction versus the external, systematically destructive force of colonialism. This could further refine the theoretical understanding of internal versus external threats to Positive Peace and Addams, Jane. *Newer Ideals of Peace*. The Macmillan Company, 1907.

Conclusion:

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* serves not only as a powerful narrative of colonial encounter but also as a profound commentary on the fragility of peace in the face of cultural domination. Through the lens of peace and conflict theory, particularly Johan Galtung's concept of **positive peace**, this study has shown that the disruption caused by colonialism extends beyond physical violence to the deeper dismantling of indigenous systems, values, and identities.

The Igbo society portrayed in the novel maintained its own forms of justice, spirituality, and social cohesion—hallmarks of positive peace that were eroded by the arrival of European missionaries and colonial administrators. The cultural conflict at the heart of the novel illustrates how imposed change, when done without understanding or respect, can fracture a society and leave long-lasting psychological and structural damage.

Achebe does not idealize the Igbo world but instead critiques both indigenous flaws and colonial destructiveness. In doing so, he challenges readers to recognize the complexity of cultural encounters and the high cost of peace lost through erasure and marginalization.

Ultimately, this study emphasizes the importance of culturally informed peacebuilding and the need to value indigenous systems in creating lasting peace. Achebe's work reminds us that the path to reconciliation must involve more than political independence—it must also restore dignity, identity, and the cultural foundations that support true peace.

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