



MUNESCO

Forum: SF1

Issue: The issue of neo-colonialism with a special emphasis on Africa.

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Introduction

Africa, as a continent, has been impacted by western colonialism starting from the 15th century. After the initial waves of colonialism of Africa ended with the fall of European empires, it became apparent in the recent years that new forms of colonialism lived on through various hidden forms. Neo-colonialism, also called “new colonialism”, is the policy of cultural, political and socioeconomic influences being continued as a model of colonialism which allows states to control other states, as an aftermath of colonialism.

Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, who first introduced the term “neo-colonialism”, argues that this practice is directly related to the dominant poverty in Africa. Although the initial colonial system that was apparent in the 19th and 20th centuries has been demolished, the suppressing social, political, cultural, and economic ties between western nations and the continent still exists. These ties result in the preservation of the negative impacts of colonialism without the “official” control of African countries.

UN member countries are heavily divided around the practice of neocolonialism. African countries, most of them being colonized in the past, suffer from the harmful influence of neocolonialism. While these states argue that more needs to be done to address the issue, countries who can be considered neocolonialists question the existence of neocolonialism.



Definition of Key Terms

Colonies: Oxford dictionary defines colonies as “Countries or areas under the full or partial political control of another country and occupied by settlers from that country”.

Colonialism: The exploitation/control of countries by other countries is called Colonialism.

Dependency theory: The theory that argues that economic underdevelopment is imposed by the global economic and political order, leading specific countries to be dependent on other countries.

Neo-colonialism: The new wave of colonialism, resulting in the exploitation of countries by other countries, using social, political, cultural, and economic relations, is called neo-colonialism. The countries aren't “directly” being controlled, but their situations are being taken advantage of.

Background Information

The Term “Neo-colonialism”

The idea of neocolonialism was introduced by the first official president of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah in his book “Neo-colonialism: the Last Stage of Imperialism”;

“Neo-colonialism is...the worst form of imperialism. For those who practise it, it means power without responsibility and for those who suffer from it, it means exploitation without redress. In the days of old-fashioned colonialism, the imperial power had at least to explain and justify at home the actions it was taking abroad. In the colony those who served the ruling imperial power could at least look to its protection against any violent move by their opponents. With neo-colonialism neither is the case.” - Kwame Nkrumah

Nkrumah argues that specific characteristics define neocolonialism; the controlling state actively interfering in the affairs of an independent state, the colonial state exerting economic influence on neo-colonised territories, and the rulers in the neo-colonised territory prioritizing the demands of the colonial country over the needs of their own country. Neo-colonialism essentially advances with the development and dependency theory. Third World countries inevitably become influenced by Western countries culturally, politically, and economically, which causes them to be dependent, creating lays a foundation for neo-colonialism.

The History of Colonialism

Neo-colonialism mostly focuses on the relationship between the previous colonizer and colony. To understand neocolonialism, colonialism should be understood. There has been two “great waves” of colonialism. The first wave started during Europe’s “Age of Discovery”, in the 15th century. European countries such as Britain, Portugal, Spain, and France colonized America. Their motivations were to spread Christianity and to exploit resources such as gold. They also wanted the glory of becoming the country with the largest number of colonies. According to the colonists, a place did not exist unless European countries had seen it. Although natives have been living in the Americas for many years, it was discovered in 1499 until Amerigo Vespucci “discovered it”.

The second wave of colonialism started in the 19th century, and it focused on Africa. The race between European countries, including Britain, Portugal, Spain, and France, to exploit African land is now called the “Scramble for Africa”. The borders that the European countries created divided cultural groups, which caused severe ethnic tension throughout the continent. The traditional political and social order in Africa was completely decimated. European rulers were brutal against the African people. One of the most violent of the rulers, was King Leopold II of Belgium, also known as “the butcher of Congo”. An estimated amount of 10 million Congolese people were killed during his regime.

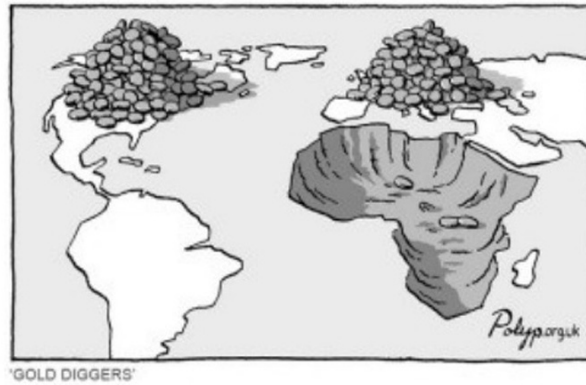
Dependency Theory

The Dependency Theory is essential to understanding economic neocolonialism. The theory suggests that the wealthiest states who are economically strong obtain human capital, production output, natural and other various resources, through the impoverishment of poorer countries. This situation causes the poorer countries to be dependant on the wealthier countries, building up the basis of neocolonialism. The theory was first introduced in the 1960s, after World War 2, while researchers investigated the reasoning for the lack of development in Latin American countries. The dependency theory is very applicable for the current situation in several African countries.

Current Situation

Several Asian and European countries have been accused of Neocolonialism, but their arguments are that they are helping African countries by buying land and supporting the fragile economy. As expected, African countries aren’t content with the situation. Several african countries are aware of their need for foreign investments, but it has been very difficult to find investments without being economically dependant on other countries.

NEOCOLONIALISM



Timeline of Major Events

1624	Barbados and St. Kitts are colonized by England. European countries start taking interest in Africa.
1950-1960	Decolonization efforts start in Africa.
1965	The term “neo-colonialism” is introduced by Kwame Nkrumah in his book “The Last Stage of Imperialism”.
1974	Resolutions 3201 and 3202 are approved and passed by the UN General Assembly.
2008	A South Korean company called Daewoo secures approximately 1.3 million hectares of land in Madagascar.
2000-2010	Interest in foreign investment in Africa spikes (mostly from the Middle East and Asia)

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

China

With regards to the African continent, China has been accused of being a major neo-colonialist. China has been very involved in the continent in various major industries; including the oil industry in Nigeria and Sudan, and the mining industry in Zimbabwe and Congo. The Chinese have been importing Cobalt, copper, and platinum from Zimbabwe, and timber from Congo. They currently have investments on 27 major gas and oil projects, and have been looking for new investments. China’s Prime Minister Wen and President Hu made a

promise to commit 2.5 Billion USD to Egypt, and offered very similar promises to other African countries. However, The World Financial Review claims that the Chinese business model in Africa benefits the local economy. The review also criticizes the fact that China supports undemocratic regimes, disregards environmental standards, encourages poor labour practices, and provides unfair competition in the African domestic market which impacts local firms negatively.

France

France has had strong connections with African nations in the past, and still believes that maintaining these deep ties are important. The French Development Agency provides billions of dollars to African countries every single year through deals that are in place. However, France has also been accused of neocolonialism after France intervened in the Ivorian Civil war in 2002.

Germany

Germany also has also established a strong relationship with African countries, several deals are in place regarding raw materials and energy. More can be done in order to benefit both Germany and African countries.

United States of America

USA has invested a lot of money in Africa, inevitably resulting in economic dependency of African countries.

United Kingdom

As one the biggest colonial powers of the past, United Kingdom has also been investing in Africa. A british fuel company has been granted a 99 year lease on Tanzanian land. The company promised to support the local economy.

India

The prime minister of India, Manmohan Singh has recently promised to invest in third-world African countries to help their economies to move up the “value chain”.

African Countries

African countries are resenting neocolonialist policies, however they do realize their need for foreign investments. Currently, there are agreements including these neocolonialist policies that are harming their economies and exploiting their citizens and land. They are looking for a way to end these agreements without damaging their countries.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Although there has been many agreements regarding decolonization, there have been no efforts to end neocolonialism. This is because several western countries do not acknowledge neocolonialism as an issue; they argue that they are simply investing in African countries.

Possible Solutions

The United Nations dominantly believes that banning all foreign investments and influences would be impractical and harmful, however it acknowledges the concerns and the fact that compromises should be made for African economies to stand on their own.

Foreign investments are vital for the development and improvement of African economies, as seen by the UNDP constantly encouraging foreign investments. However, neocolonialism is considered to be a result of foreign investments. Measures and regulations should be set that limit these investments, prevent neocolonialism, and ensure respect for national sovereignty.

Useful Links For Further Research

- <https://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/nkrumah/neo-colonialism/introduction.htm>
- https://depts.washington.edu/chid/The_Anthology_Project/2007/Baker_Humanitarianism.pdf
- <https://www.iep.utm.edu/neocolon/>
- https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/theworldpost/wp/2018/04/12/china-africa/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.943efb792e9e
- <https://thediplomat.com/2017/06/why-chinese-infrastructure-loans-in-africa-represent-a-brand-new-type-of-neocolonialism/>
- <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/op-eds/how-progressive-neo-colonialism-seeks-to-keep-africans-in-poverty>

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2. Coggin, Will, and AP Photo/Salim Henry. "How Progressive Neo-Colonialism Seeks to Keep Africans in Poverty." *Washington Examiner*, 30 Aug. 2018, www.washingtonexaminer.com/opinion/op-eds/how-progressive-neo-colonialism-seeks-to-keep-africans-in-poverty.
3. *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, www.iep.utm.edu/neocolon/.
4. Nkrumah, Kwame. "Introduction." *Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism* by Kwame Nkrumah, www.marxists.org/subject/africa/nkrumah/neo-colonialism/introduction.htm.
5. Su, Xiaochen. "Why Chinese Infrastructure Loans in Africa Represent a Brand-New Type of Neocolonialism." – *The Diplomat*, For The Diplomat, 17 June 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/06/why-chinese-infrastructural-loans-in-africa-represent-a-brand-new-type-of-neocolonialism/>