



# The issue of **neo-colonialism in Africa**

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## Introduction

Neo-colonialism is a term used to describe the ongoing influence and control of former colonial powers over newly independent countries. This can take various forms, including economic, political, and cultural domination. In Africa, colonialism's legacy has significantly impacted the continent's development and continues to shape its present and future.

The colonial period in Africa began in the late 19th century, as European powers carved up the continent and established colonies and protectorates. This process was accompanied by violence, exploitation, and the suppression of indigenous cultures and economies. Despite the formal end of colonialism in the mid-20th century, the legacy of this period remains evident in the political and economic systems of many African countries.

One of the key ways in which neo-colonialism manifests in Africa is through economic domination. Many African countries continue to rely heavily on exports of raw materials, such as oil, minerals, and agricultural products, to the developed world. This leaves them vulnerable to the fluctuations of the global market and the policies of these developed countries. Furthermore, the terms of trade are often heavily skewed in favour of the developed world, resulting in the continued exploitation of African resources.

Additionally, foreign corporations often dominate key sectors of the African economy, such as extractive industries, telecommunications, and banking. This further reinforces the dependency of African countries on external actors and limits their ability to develop and diversify their economies.

Political domination is another form of neo-colonialism in Africa. Many African countries have experienced coups, civil wars, and other forms of political instability, often fueled by external interests. For example, during the Cold War, African countries were often caught in the middle of proxy wars between the United States and the Soviet Union. This legacy of interference continues to impact African politics, as external actors seek to shape the political landscape in their favor.

Cultural domination is also a form of neo-colonialism in Africa. The colonial period saw the suppression of indigenous cultures and the promotion of European cultures. This has had lasting effects on African societies, as many people continue to aspire to Western lifestyles and values. Furthermore, the dominance of Western media and cultural products has contributed to a homogenization of global culture, leading to the erosion of local traditions and identities.

The impact of neo-colonialism on Africa has been significant and far-reaching. It has contributed to economic stagnation, political instability, and cultural erosion. However, it is important to note that African countries are not passive victims of this process. Many African leaders and activists have fought

and continue to fight for independence and self-determination. There are also examples of successful efforts to resist and challenge neo-colonialism, such as the liberation movements of the 20th century and the current push for greater economic diversification and self-reliance.

Overall, the issue of neo-colonialism in Africa is a complex and multifaceted one that requires a nuanced understanding of the historical, economic, and political factors at play. This report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of neo-colonialism in Africa, including its various forms, its impact on the continent, and efforts to resist and challenge it. By understanding the ongoing influence and control of former colonial powers, we can better understand the challenges facing Africa and work towards a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

## Definition of Key Terms

### **Africa**

Africa is the world's second-largest continent in terms of land area and population. It is located to the south of Europe and to the west of Asia, and it is bounded to the north by the Mediterranean Sea, to the northeast by the Red Sea, to the east and southeast by the Indian Ocean, and to the west by the Atlantic Ocean. Africa is home to a wide range of cultures, languages, and people, as well as a long history dating back thousands of years. The continent is home to 54 countries, with Cairo, Lagos, and Kinshasa as its largest cities.

### **Banana republic**

A "banana republic" is a small, impoverished, politically unstable country that is weak as a result of its over-reliance on one particular export product and foreign funding.

### **Dependency theory**

Dependency theory is the theoretical underpinning of economic neocolonialism, which proposes that the global economic system is divided into wealthy countries in the centre and poor countries on the periphery. Economic neocolonialism extracts a peripheral (lesser economically developed) country's human and natural resources to flow to the economies of wealthy countries at the centre of the global economic system; thus, the poverty of the peripheral countries is the result of how they are integrated into the global economic system.

### **Imperialism**

Understanding the basic mode of operation of imperialism suggests that foreign governments can govern a territory without a significant settlement, in contrast to colonialism, which relies heavily on settlement. Imperialism is simply the exercise of power over conquered regions without any form of immigration; in other words, imperialism is a policy or ideology of extending a country's rule or authority over other countries and people, often through military force or by gaining political and economic control. It is almost synonymous with neocolonialism.

### **Neo-Colonialism**

One can always argue about these terms, but neocolonialism is often defined as the geopolitical practice of influencing a country through capitalism, business, globalisation, and cultural imperialism, rather than direct military control or indirect political control.

## General Overview

### The colonial period in Africa

The colonial period in Africa was characterised by the exploitation and suppression of indigenous cultures and economies by European powers. Beginning in the late 19th century, European countries partitioned and claimed large portions of the African continent as their colonies, establishing control over the resources, labour, and markets of these territories. During this time, European powers implemented a range of policies and practices designed to extract resources and wealth from Africa, often at the expense of the indigenous population. This included the forced labour of millions of Africans on European-owned plantations and mines, the extraction of natural resources such as oil, minerals, and rubber, and the exploitation of African markets for European goods.

In addition to economic exploitation, the colonial period also involved the suppression of indigenous cultures and the promotion of European cultural values. This included the forced conversion of Africans to Christianity, the suppression of traditional religions and practices, and the promotion of European languages and education systems. The colonial period in Africa had lasting impacts on the continent and its people, including the disruption of traditional societies and economies, the creation of arbitrary borders and political systems, and the ongoing exploitation of African resources by external actors. The legacy of colonialism continues to be felt in Africa today in the form of ongoing economic and political challenges, including debt, resource depletion, and weak governance.

### Cultural erosion

Neocolonialism can lead to cultural erosion in several ways.

First, neocolonialism often involves the suppression of indigenous cultures and the promotion of the colonising power's culture. This can involve the forced assimilation of indigenous peoples into the coloniser's culture, the suppression of indigenous languages and traditions, and the promotion of the coloniser's religion and values. This process can lead to the loss of cultural identities and traditions, as well as a sense of disconnection from one's own history and heritage.

Second, the dominance of Western media and cultural products in neo-colonised countries can contribute to a homogenization of global culture, leading to the erosion of local traditions and identities. The proliferation of Western music, films, and other cultural products can lead to the adoption of Western lifestyles and values, leading to a loss of cultural distinctiveness.

Last, the economic domination of neo-colonised countries by foreign corporations can also lead to cultural erosion. This is because these corporations often impose their own cultural values and practices on the local population, such as dress codes, work practices, and consumer preferences. This can lead to the adoption of these practices and a loss of local cultural traditions.

### Environmental degradation

The three main reasons for environmental degradation being caused by neo-colonialism are: resource extraction, exploitation of cheap labour, and inconvenient trade policies.

The extraction of natural resources, such as oil, minerals, and timber, is a key aspect of neo-colonialism in many countries, particularly in Africa. This extraction often involves the use of heavy machinery and

other technologies that can have negative impacts on the environment, such as pollution, habitat destruction, and soil degradation.

The exploitation of cheap labour in developing countries can also contribute to environmental degradation. For example, multinational corporations may set up factories or other operations in areas with lax environmental regulations, leading to pollution and other negative impacts on the environment.

Western countries have often pursued trade policies that benefit their own economies at the expense of developing countries. For example, they may impose tariffs or other barriers to exports from these countries, while simultaneously providing subsidies and other advantages to their own industries. This can encourage the development of environmentally damaging industries in developing countries, such as the production of cheap, disposable goods.

### **Political instability**

Political instability in ex-colonies is a persistent issue that has affected many countries around the world. This instability is often the result of a complex mix of historical, social, and economic factors that have shaped the political landscape of these countries.

One major factor contributing to political instability in ex-colonies is the legacy of colonialism. Many ex-colonies were subjected to brutal and oppressive regimes during their time as colonies, which left deep scars and divisions in society. These divisions often continue to shape the political landscape of these countries long after independence.

Additionally, the process of decolonization itself can be a major source of political instability. In many cases, the transition from colonial rule to independence was not peaceful, and resulted in violent conflicts that continued long after independence. This can lead to ongoing tensions and conflicts within society, which can disrupt the political stability of the country.

Another factor contributing to political instability in ex-colonies is the lack of strong and effective institutions. Many ex-colonies lack well-functioning democratic systems, and instead rely on autocratic or authoritarian regimes. This can lead to a lack of accountability and transparency, and can contribute to political instability.

Finally, economic factors can also play a role in political instability in ex-colonies. Many of these countries are still developing, and face significant challenges in terms of poverty, unemployment, and inequality. These issues can fuel political unrest and contribute to instability.

Overall, political instability in ex-colonies is a complex and multifaceted issue that is influenced by a range of historical, social, and economic factors. Addressing this instability will require a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of the problem, and works to build strong and effective institutions that can foster stability and prosperity.

### **Foreign aid**

One aspect of foreign aid is support for the donor country's policy. This procedure works in a manner similar to lobbying. Previously, monetary aid to a country in foreign aid would be divided into several pieces for various policy reasons. One part would be in support of military aid, with arms sales from the

donor country to the recipient country. One part would support the donor country's defence policies, while the other would support technology and non-military aid. So only half of the funds could theoretically be used for actual aid, though this is unlikely.

Foreign aid was initially supposed to contain communism, expand US markets, right wrongs against the Developing World, and feed the hungry. Despite its "good intentions," this programme provided hidden subsidies to industrialists while maintaining democracy. The concept of foreign aid appears to strengthen the government of the country receiving aid rather than the nation itself. Constraints are adapted and incorporated into the organisation's behaviour. Despite the fact that the organisation could benefit from environmental control, it attracts insensitive technicians with no training in development issues.

Foreign aid is a contracting bid, it is built into the budgets of countries receiving aid, it is only courteous to leading figures, and it is self-perpetuating. It keeps the country in poverty. Foreign aid significantly increases a country's debt relative to GDP. Aid tied to the donor country qualifies that country for donor-country contract bids. Aid is only given to friendly countries to benefit the capitalist elite, allowing corrupt leaders on both sides to remain at the helm. Foreign aid is primarily used as a weapon, while food is used as a tool. Foreign aid obscures the true causes of aid need. Examples include family planning, where elite owners create the illusion that it was the fault of the demography rather than the programme itself.

As a result, the foreign aid process is riddled with corruption and hidden agendas. Because it is built into the budgets of accepting countries, it self-perpetuates poverty. Programs that are seemingly supported by aid that fail are blamed on the populations rather than the redirection of aid funds into the pockets of corrupt leaders. Corrupt leaders in both donor and receiving countries remain in power thanks to aid. The aid given to these countries serves as a stipend to allow them to compete for contracts with the donor countries. The aid program's broken system causes more problems than it solves. "Trade not aid" would be a better solution. This will be covered in greater detail in the 'possible solutions' section. Another aspect of foreign aid is its connection to multinational corporations (MNCs). Donations are frequently invested in MNCs to support capitalist systems.

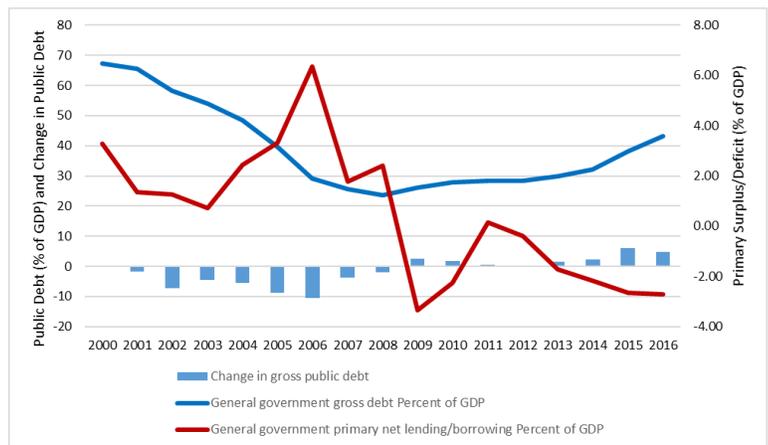


Figure 1: Graph on Public Debt

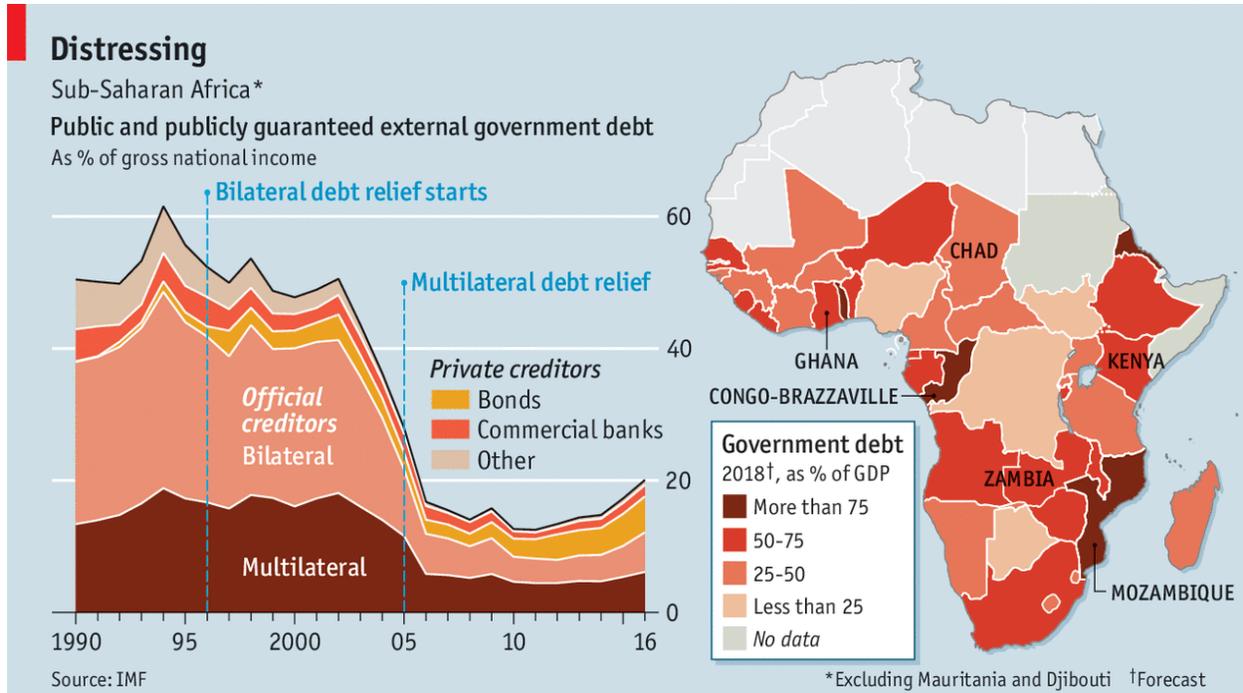


Figure 2: Distressing in Africa, economist

### MNCs

Multinational corporations based in Africa typically operate as separate technical companies, subject to the laws of the country in which they are based. They do, however, frequently absorb a significant portion of the capital that is concentrated locally, within the country in which they operate. Many of these countries, however, lack sufficient capital to meet the needs of their own people, so funds are obtained from other MNCs within the country or from foreign aid funds sent through the government from which the MNC originated. Foreign aid and multinational corporations are inextricably linked because aid is channelled through them by organisations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, various development banks, and United Nations agencies. All of these are under the control and funding of major power governments. A significant portion of aid money is invested in infrastructure companies under the guise of development.

Foreign aid and corporate corruption can coexist with minor distinctions. These neocolonial mechanisms are highly detrimental to developing countries. Another source of harm in these countries is the previously mentioned corrupt leadership.

### Timeline of Key Events

There have been no clear tipping points pertaining to this issue; Africa's relationship with the rest of the world has always evolved since their independence following World War II.

### Major Parties Involved

#### Former colonial powers

These are the countries that were once colonial powers, and continue to wield significant economic and political influence in their ex-colonies. Examples of former colonial powers include the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Spain.

### **Ex-colonies**

These are the countries that were formerly colonised by the above powers, and continue to be affected by their influence. In this instance it is important to note that the problem immediately followed after the independence of the specific African states.

### **International organisations**

These are organisations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund that have significant influence over the economic policies of ex-colonies. They often impose conditions on loans and assistance to these countries, which can shape their economic and political direction.

### **Multinational corporations**

These are companies that operate in multiple countries, and often have significant influence over the economies of ex-colonies. They often control key sectors of the economy, such as resource extraction or manufacturing, and can shape economic policy to suit their interests.

## **Possible Solutions**

According to Dependency Theory, these countries require change, which they do, but they also require each other, other countries outside of Africa, and education in order to pass on their knowledge and advances to future generations. Putting pressure on leaders as well as utilising military and agency assistance will be required. Development, rather than foreign aid or military occupations. Less developed countries can reduce their reliance on aid and the secret flow of capital from multinational corporations by strengthening their free markets, removing barriers to private international trade, and encouraging private investment.

Africa is nowhere near the top of the list of countries with a comparative advantage. Africa does not specialise in anything other than the extraction of minerals and rocks through the use of force and the establishment of conflict zones. They must also end the assistance and begin debt repayment. Finally, in accordance with the adage "trade not aid," the continent must play a larger financial role in international affairs.

### **Escaping neocolonialism**

There are three major ways to 'escape' neocolonialism: have a strong central government, reduce reliance on exports, and make foreign capital decisions. These three suggestions are self-explanatory and sequential. The rest of the suggestions cannot be implemented without a strong government to make these important decisions. Reducing their reliance on exports and increasing their reliance on domestic consumption will increase not only the state's tax revenue, but also the livelihood of local businesses. These decisions, once again, cannot be made in the absence of a strong government.

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