

## THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATION OF THE NEW PATTERN OF NEOCOLONIALISM IN AFRICA IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

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### **Abstract**

The legacy of colonial exploitation persists, as Africa continues to face exploitation by international powers, perpetuating a cycle of economic disparity and social injustice that began with colonization. This paper explores the socioeconomic implications of the new pattern of neo-colonialism in Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The paper identifies how African countries through the new form of neo-colonialism have been influenced in many areas, particularly their socioeconomic life. The paper adopts analytical and historical methods of research. The paper argues that cultural imperialism remains a critical tool of the West regarding Africa's re-colonisation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century particularly the upholding of the Eurocentric ideology of civilization, racial and cultural domination. The paper therefore notes that Africa can be liberated from all forms of neo-colonialism by eschewing corrupt practices in her administration and thereby adhering to true democratic practices. Notwithstanding, African people need to start placing a premium on their norms, indigenous products and educational system. This will checkmate Africa's migration to the west. The paper recommends that African people should desist from Western activities that continue to increase neo-colonial activities which continue to undermine and demean Africa's socioeconomic and political life.

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### **Introduction**

The 21st century has seen the increase of invasive forms of neo-colonialism in Africa. This new form of neo-colonialism is characterized by the large-scale socioeconomic domination of African peoples by developed countries. Neo-colonialism has had a lasting negative impact on the socioeconomic structures, and government institutions of many African nations. Environmentally, neo-colonialism has brought uncontrolled harnessing of the resources of African people and thereby foreign companies continue to benefit from illegal logging, illegal fishing, mining, oil extraction, and trespassing of wildlife. This development has led to environmental degradation like deforestation, habitat loss, desertification, air and water pollution etc. At present, natural resources are being exploited for the benefit of the Western countries regarding their businesses, while little gain is brought to the people of Africa. Regarding the social and economic settings in Africa, neo-colonialism has had a damaging effect on African nations, because foreign control of resources has led to increased poverty and inequality. For example, foreign companies have secure reliable access to resources at the detriment of the local communities in Africa. This has prevented infrastructural development and other important services in Africa such as healthcare, education, good networks of roads and thereby decreasing the standard of living in many African countries.

Neo-colonialism, however, refers to the indirect control or domination of developing countries by developed countries in various ways. In the 21st century, the new form of neo-colonialism in Africa can be seen in various ways. It is a fact that imperialism and colonialism in Africa are no longer invoked but neo-colonialism has become a serious issue that African people are battling with. It has changed and damaged some people's mode of reasoning, worldview, identity, languages and history in Africa.

Nkrumah believes that the European powers are using colonialism to satisfy their need and purposes and thereby in a great dimension exploiting African territories for their aggrandizement of the metropolitan countries. (Nkrumah, 1963). According to him the development of European countries led to the acquisition of new territories in Africa. (Nkrumah, 1963). The developed countries continue to dominate the political, social, and economic life of African people. This aspect of domination keeps resulting in the direct exercise of political power through the implementation of certain policies that continue to undeveloped the people of Africa.

Africa's freedom, political and economic activities have been tampered with in this era of neo-colonialism. Such was replaced with the metropolis that was considered more "educated" and "sophisticated" without proper consideration of Africa's values" (Falaiye, 1997). The above statement made by Jean-Paul Sartre in his "Preface" to Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, informed his fellow contemporaries particularly some people from developed countries that they should read the above book and that in the recourse they will discover the damage they have done to Africa people. In his words, Sartre declares: "No matter what the whites think about Africa at colonialism, they therefore know us by their scars and by their chains (Fanon, 1968).

In Africa, the new form of imperialism which is neo-colonialism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has had a serious effect on the people of Africa. It is unfortunate to mention that the people of Africa are under the siege of indirect colonisation and imperialism by Western countries. This subtle and decisive form of colonialism continues to influence Africa socially, economically and otherwise.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper's theory will be framed on dependency theory. Over the years in Africa, dependency has been the common glaring phenomenon that continues to impoverish African nations in many areas. Dependency theory is a situation where resources

flow from underdeveloped countries to developed countries thereby enriching them at the expense of the underdeveloped communities. The general contention of the theory is that poor countries are impoverished while the rich ones are enriched by the pattern poor countries are integrated into the global pattern and system. The above theory was developed in the 1960s after World War II, (Ahiakpor, 1985). The theory stipulates that societies progress through similar stages of development and that the present underdeveloped areas are similar to developed areas at some time. The task of assisting the developing areas out of poverty is to ensure proper development in her socioeconomic life, through improvement in her technology and closer integration into the world market. (Newschool, "Economic Development" 2009.). Many scholars argued for its continuing importance as an orientation to the global division of wealth and resources (James, 1997). The theory can be divided into: liberal reformists and neo-Marxists. Liberal reformists thereby advocate for the policy of interventions, while neo-Marxists strongly believe in a command-centralisation of the economy (Latin American Dependency Theory, Global South Studies, 2020).

The dependency theory is based on economic policies that were criticized by Peter Bauer, Martin Wolf and others (Korotayev, et al 2014) because the following features characterised the theory;

Lack of competition through subsidizing in-country industries and preventing outside imports, these companies may have less incentive to improve their products, in order to become more efficient in their processes, to please customers, or innovations. Sustainability industries reliant on government support may not be sustainable for very long, particularly in poorer countries and countries which largely depend on foreign aid from more developed countries and domestic opportunity costs subsidies on domestic industries come out of state coffers and therefore represent money not spent in other ways, like the development of domestic infrastructure, seed capital or need-based social welfare programmes. At the same time, the higher prices caused

by tariffs and restrictions on imports require people either to forgo these goods altogether or buy them at higher prices, forgoing other goods. (Williams, 2014).

Dependency theorists believe that “the condition of underdevelopment remains the reason for the incorporation of the poor countries’ economies into the global world system which is under the control of the West and North America” (Randall and Theobald, 1998). In development studies, dependency means a situation whereby a particular country relies on another for support, development and growth. (Randall and Theobald, 1998 ). Numerous countries in Africa are underdeveloped economically because of a lack of self-determination. The continent is also considered an entity characterised by poverty, high birth rates, and economic dependence on advanced countries. The underdevelopment of the developing countries is marked by distorted and dependent economic syndrome devoted to the production of primary products for the developed nations. The developing nations are also providing a market for the finished products imported from the developing countries.

### **The Social Implication of New Form of Neo-colonialism in Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

It is a fact that African nations were immediately neo-colonised after their independence from their colonialists. This domination lasted for more than three decades until many countries in Africa resorted to various policies of liberation from neo-colonialism. However, the Western nations have strategized a new pattern of neo-colonialism in the form of academic imperialism, cultural imperialism, domination and indirect encouragement of African migration to the developed countries. The glaring social features of the new form of neo-colonialism can be explained in detail as follows;

- **Academic Imperialism:** Unfortunately, many African countries have been imperialised academically in many

dimensions. This development has made many parents have the flare to send their children to study in the developed countries, but most of the universities in developed countries are not better than some Africa's Universities that many African parents are sending their children to study.

In a related development, academic imperialism has also made many institutions in Africa undermine their indigenous university journals to an extent, thereby placing a high premium on foreign journals that are domiciled in the West. This omen in the academic circle continues to affect our academic development and growth. Currently, in Africa many university's promotion benchmark is centred on 60 per cent of publications from foreign journals that are indexed in some of the indexing companies domiciled in the developed countries.

Academic colonialism started with Western education, which has not been seriously challenged by developing countries. (Raju 2010). It refers to the dominance of certain academic perspectives, and research methodologies from developed countries over the scholarship and knowledge production of non-Western or developing countries. It is also a kind of situation that results due to unequal relations in the academic circle, where one group dominates the other (Balihar et al 2007). According to (Bagele 2011) it is a way of oppressing others academically. One of the manifestations of academic imperialism is the unequal distribution of resources and funding, thereby placing more attention and resources being directed towards research conducted by Western institutions, while scholars from developing countries struggle to access adequate resources to conduct their research. This glaring imbalance can perpetuate a sheer dependency on Western scholarship and therefore hinders the generation of locally relevant knowledge.

According to (Syed 2003),

he judiciously listed six aspects of academic dependency;  
Dependence on ideas; Dependence on the media of ideas;

Dependence on the technology of education; Dependence on aid for research as well as teaching; Dependence on investment in education and dependence on developing country's social scientists on demand in the West for their skills.

Local knowledge systems, traditional practices, and indigenous perspectives may be dismissed or undervalued in favour of Western theoretical frameworks, which continue to limit the diversity and inclusiveness of academic knowledge. It also shaped the research agenda and priorities of developing countries. Western ideas and research interests may take precedence over issues that are more pressing or relevant to local communities. This can result in a disconnection between academic research and the needs of the people it aims to serve.

- **Cultural Imperialism and Domination:** This is another aspect of neo-colonialism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It manifests through cultural imperialism, where Western cultures are imposed on African societies through media such as movies, music, and fashion. This trend continues to undermine traditional African cultural identity and thereby promoting Western values and ideals. It has contributed to the diminishing of local languages, traditions, and cultural practices. The dominance of Western media, cultural products, and educational systems often erodes African cultural identities thereby promoting a sense of inferiority among Africans. This has led to a loss of self-confidence and perpetuate a cycle of cultural dependency. **Cultural imperialism** is the imposition of the culture of a particular group of people to another community or group of people. It is a form of domination because the imposing society extends the power of its way of life to the other population by either transforming or replacing the aspects of the nondominant community's culture (Theresa, 2020).

Cultural colonisation started in the 1960s (Theresa, 2020). These practices are linked with military intervention and conquest. The rise of the Roman Empire provides some of

the early examples in the history of Western civilization and highlights both the negative and positive aspects of such a pattern (Theresa, 2020). In the era of Pax Romana, the Romans secured a long period of stable peace among previously war-torn territories through a unified legal system and technological improvement (Therasa, 2020). Presently, many young people in Africa have been swallowed by the culture of the West. This omen manifests in the form of indecent dressing syndrome among married and young people. Such antisocial behaviour is inimical to Africa's social development.

- **Indirect Support to Africa's Migration to the West:** The Western Powers on most occasions continue to support bad African governments indirectly. The nature of Africa's economy and administration continue to encourage the migration of people to the West. This has led to brain drain. It is a fact, that the West are not interested in the socio-economic development of Africa. Reasoning in the same direction on the subject of discussion, Adeola Olajide, notes;

As such people move both within the country and across international borders with the expectation that they will have access to better opportunities in the destination location in order to benefit themselves, their immediate families and communities. The movement from one part of a country to another for example from a hamlet to a village and later from a village to a town is usually the start and the characteristic pattern of migration. One moves to a place considered to be better or to have more opportunities. Several push and pull factors are responsible for this but some factors could be peculiar to the individual (Olajide, 2019).

The African leaders need proper orientation on the issue of migration because indirectly we are being neo-colonised again in this direction. Many persons have lost their lives in the sea while others have been imprisoned in some of these developed countries because of their involvement in activities that are inimical to the social and economic development of such

countries. Because of the poor nature of some of the educational facilities in Africa, many young people have resorted to educational migration to other countries in search of a better school. Many young people in developing countries believe that home universities cannot provide a standard education that will propel them into good careers. The reason for studying in a developed country has become an important part of some societies particularly developing countries (Ali, 2007).

### **The New Form of Neo-colonialism in Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> and the Economic Implication**

African countries often remain dependent on former colonial countries for trade, investment, and aid. This is a result of unequal power dynamics, with African economies being exploited for resources and cheap labour while benefiting little from the value created. The foreign companies of the developed countries keep investing heavily in Africa for their benefit and not really to develop the African economy but rather to exploit it. These companies take advantage of cheap labour, resources, and lax regulations to extract profits without investing in the long-term development of the African economies. This results in unequal and unsustainable economic growth that benefits those foreign companies and perpetuates poverty and underdevelopment in the continent.

Additionally, the influence of the World Bank and other international financial institutions on African economies can also be seen as a new form of neo-colonialism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These organisations have the power to dictate economic policies and development strategies to African countries, which often results in the prioritization of debt repayment over investment in infrastructure, education and health care etc. Before the partition of Africa by some European countries, the economy of Africa was advancing in many areas, particularly in trade and agriculture. The purpose of colonialism is basically to exploit African people just for the benefit of the colonising countries. The European nations followed this goal and purpose by encouraging the development of a commodity-based trading

pattern, production of cash crops, building of trade networks and thereby linking the economic output of that particular region to the developing countries. Colonialism and Africa's partition by the European countries impeded Africa's economic development and system (Joshua D. Settles and Ferlin McGaskey, 1996).

Africa before colonialism was not economically underdeveloped and isolated from the rest of the world. Many African states were engaged in foreign trade with other countries. West Africa had developed international trading systems even before colonisation. These large empires depended on the taxing of foreign trade to finance the expenditures of the government. The wealth of these nations was dependent on the trade in gold, but also on the levying of customs, taxes, booty from foreign expeditions, and fees associated with administrative offices (Joshua D. Settles and Ferlin McGaskey, 1996).

Economically, there is a glaring unequal relationship between Africa and the West. However, it is a fact that China is gradually colonising Africa socially and economically. China remains Africa's largest trading partner. Notwithstanding, Kenya and Ethiopia are the only two African nations that have signed economic and trade agreements at the Belt and Road Forum (Barf) in Beijing in 2018 (Nick Van Mead, 2018). The flagship Belt and Road project is Kenya's 290-mile railway from the capital, Nairobi, to the port city of Mombasa. They plan to extend that network into South Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi; it was already the country's largest infrastructure project since independence (Nick Van Mead, 2018). The presence of China in Africa remains a new form of neo-colonialism. This is because the country is not ready to develop the economy of Africa, rather they want Africa to keep depending on them for survival. From the look of things, China is continuing from where the former colonial lords stopped in the area of colonialization. Their presence in Africa will continue to impoverish the continent.

Many people believe that Kenya cannot repay the money they borrowed from International financial institutions and China. Gradually, China will continue to dominate the country (Obura, 2021; Odhiambo, 2021). Many scholars have argued that this debt trap is a myth (Brautigam & Rithmire, 2021). We should not ignore the fact that the Kenyans are affected by this situation. China's plan is to loan money to poor countries and thereby help them build things for their own prosperity (Owaahh, 2018). Therefore, many of these Chinese loans contain unusual confidentiality clauses that continue to influence foreign and domestic policy (Gelpern et al., 2021; Juma et al., 2021).

Furthermore, Taylor (2019) notes;

that the most important form of neo-colonialism in Africa is the continued implementation of the CFA (Communauté Financière Africaine) currency in Francophone countries. France has a continued presence in her former colonies through the currency, but it also influences the educational institutions and continues to have a military presence in many of these countries.

The CFA is not only controlled by France but the countries that use this currency are required to deposit 65% of their international reserves into a part of the French treasury (Taylor, 2019). This aspect of neo-colonialism in Africa continued to affect Africa's economic life in many areas. Some of these affected countries are living in sheer poverty, unemployment, and poor healthcare facilities.

### **Conclusion**

Inarguably, Africa is currently suffering from a new form of neo-colonialism that continues to damage her socioeconomic system. Many African governments have been forced to accept unfair trade agreements and other forms of manipulation in order to appease powerful foreign interests. This has harmed the rule of law in many countries and has allowed corrupt practices such as bribery and corruption in her various systems.

This has further hindered the proper development of African nations and also created a cycle of economic exploitation and political instability. The 21st century has seen a new form of colonialism in Africa. This neo-colonialism has had a devastating impact on many African countries, in terms of environmental degradation, cultural imperialism and domination, economic exploitation, and political manipulation. African leaders and citizens alike must be aware of the damaging effects of neo-colonialism.

### **Recommendations**

- Since there is visible academic imperialism in Africa, it is vital to promote decolonization and diversification of knowledge production that includes supporting and amplifying Africa's schools, supporting indigenous online journals that are indexed in Google Scholar, recognizing the value of non-Western knowledge systems, and fostering equitable collaborations between scholars from different regions and backgrounds.
- African leaders should start building capacity and thereby start providing resources for research in their countries. This will level the playing field and ensure a more balanced and inclusive academic landscape.
- In a related development in the academic circle in Africa, it is a fact, that in some universities, the benchmark for promotion to a certain academic rank is the publication of an article in a journal that is domiciled in civilized countries. It is good for the Universities in Africa to recognise her journal and thereby place more premium on it regarding academic promotion.
- It is very glaring that there is an alarming rate of African migration to other developed countries. To checkmate this, African leaders should embark on a project of provision of infrastructures, good educational system and well-paid jobs. This is the best way to check the high rate of migration.

- In West Africa particularly, it is observed that many influential and well-to-do people in the region usually send their children to study in developed countries. These classes of people are not encouraging the schools in Africa. The paper, therefore, suggests that such educational migration should stop. The government of African nations should pass a law that will stop such migration because it is gradually impoverishing our economy and continues to undermine our institutions. However, I am of the view that those who want to study in developed countries should go on the ground of scholarship and learning of their technologies and in the end it will contribute positively to Africa's economy.
- It is quite true that there is cultural domination of the West on African people. To checkmate this, teachers, parents and government leaders in African nations should start educating and enlightening people on the positive aspects of African culture.
- More so, the government of African nations should emphasize investing in their countries rather than investing in developed countries. This is because many influential and well-to-do African people are investing in the West and thereby leaving their country.

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