



Special Political & Decolonization (SPECPOL)

Topic 2: Neocolonialist Dynamics between LDCs and Economical Superpowers

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1. Definition of key terms

Neocolonialism: the control exerted by developed countries over less-developed nations through indirect means. Coined after World War II, the term originally addressed the ongoing dependence of former colonies on their colonizers. However, in contemporary usage, "neocolonialism" has evolved to denote colonial-like exploitation in less-developed countries.

Least Developed Countries (LDCs): low-income nations facing significant challenges in achieving sustainable development. These countries are highly vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks. A list of LDCs is compiled by the Committee for Development, and it undergoes review every three years, currently encompassing 45 countries.

Economical superpowers: states possessing substantial economic might, and their influence surpasses that of other nations. The cooperation of these powerful states is deemed essential for addressing global issues effectively.

Eco: a regional currency proposed in 2009 by West African countries.

2. Introduction

Exactly, neocolonialism refers to the contemporary form of colonialism where developed nations exert control over developing nations through economic and political means. The term was attributed to Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana. Despite gaining independence, many developing nations, particularly in Africa, still face indirect control due to economic dependencies. This dependency often makes it challenging for least developed countries to sustain themselves independently, forcing them to rely on other nations to keep their economies functioning. The influence of colonialism persists, and neocolonial dynamics continue to impact these nations.

3. Background information

Colonialism indeed has deep historical roots, particularly during the 15th century onwards, with significant impacts on various regions globally. Missionaries, often associated with colonial ventures, played a role in introducing European cultural and religious influences to indigenous populations. The colonization process, driven by economic, political, and religious motivations, expanded European control to a substantial portion of the world by the early 20th century.

The aftermath of World War II saw a wave of decolonization as colonial powers faced economic challenges and geopolitical shifts. Many colonies gained independence, entering a complex web of postcolonial and neocolonial relations. The legacy of colonization is profound, as it shaped the economic structures of the colonized countries. The dependence on colonizers for economic support created challenges for these nations to achieve genuine independence. Furthermore, the impact of colonization left lasting imprints on societies, affecting everything from governance structures to cultural norms. Even after gaining freedom, the effects of colonization continue to influence these nations. The challenge lies in addressing the historical inequalities and building sustainable, self-reliant economies and societies.

4. Major countries involved

The historical ties between West African countries and their former colonial powers, such as France and England, have indeed left lasting impacts on these nations, and neocolonial influences are still observable. The economic ties and structures established during colonial times have persisted, often putting former colonies in challenging positions.

The issue of currency control and the economic ties between France and its former colonies, particularly in West Africa, has been a point of contention. The arrangement where a significant portion of the currency funds and financial liabilities is tied to France has led to calls for reform. The plan to launch a regional currency called 'Eco' by eight West African countries is a step towards greater economic autonomy.

Unfair trade practices, especially in the exploitation of natural resources like cocoa, coffee, and minerals, highlight ongoing challenges. The prevalence of child labor in cocoa farms, despite efforts to address the issue, underscores the complexities of breaking away from neocolonial economic structures.

These challenges highlight the need for continued efforts to address historical inequities, promote fair trade practices, and empower these nations to have greater control over their economic destinies. The push for regional currencies and sustainable economic practices is a step in the direction of reducing neocolonial influences.

The exploitation of natural resources in African countries, including Ethiopia's coffee and various minerals across the continent, continues to be a contentious issue, reflecting historical patterns of economic exploitation.

In the case of coffee, the discrepancy between the earnings of local farmers and the profits made by large corporations highlights the imbalance in the global supply chain. The relatively low income received by coffee farmers, despite the high value of the final product, raises questions about fairness and equitable distribution of wealth in the industry.

The mining sector, with British companies operating in numerous African countries, exemplifies the ongoing challenges related to the extraction of valuable resources. The control these companies exert over significant portions of Africa's resources, often with little benefit to local communities, echoes historical patterns of resource exploitation.

Child labour and hazardous working conditions in mines, particularly in the Democratic Republic of Congo, point to the human cost of such resource extraction. The continuation of these practices raises ethical concerns and highlights the need for sustainable and responsible resource management.

Efforts to address these issues require a comprehensive approach, including fair trade practices, responsible corporate conduct, and policies that prioritize the well-being of local communities. International collaboration is crucial to ensuring that economic development in African countries is genuinely beneficial and does not perpetuate neocolonial dynamics.

5. Timeline of events

This timeline captures significant historical events related to colonialism, decolonization, and the emergence of neocolonialism. Here's a brief overview:

- **1492:** Christopher Columbus's discovery of the Americas marks the beginning of European colonialism in the New World.
- **1945:** The end of World War II sees the decline of colonial powers and sets the stage for decolonization.
- **1960:** Many territories in West Africa gain independence from colonial rule.
- **1960:** The General Assembly adopts the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, emphasizing the right to self-determination and decolonization.
- **1963:** Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of Ghana, speaks about neocolonialism, highlighting the continued influence of former colonial powers.
- **2009:** The proposal for the 'Eco' currency in West Africa is made, aiming to create a regional currency.

These milestones reflect the historical trajectory from the age of colonialism, through the process of decolonization in the mid-20th century, to the recognition and critique of neocolonial dynamics in subsequent years. The proposal for the 'Eco' currency in 2009 suggests ongoing efforts toward economic cooperation and regional integration in West Africa.

6. UN involvement

The information from the UN site underscores the ongoing importance of the decolonization process, with some territories still awaiting full self-governance. The engagement of administering powers, the Special Committee on Decolonization (C-24), and the affected populations is crucial for the completion of this mandate.

Linking this to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Goals 8 and 9 emphasize economic growth, decent jobs, and infrastructure development as key components of sustainable development. This aligns with efforts to address historical inequalities, promote prosperity, and foster inclusive economic development in regions, including Africa.

Specific initiatives, such as sustainable development in the palm oil sector and the EU-Africa Infrastructural Trust Fund, reflect global commitments to support African development by focusing on economic growth, job creation, and infrastructure building. These efforts aim to contribute to the overall well-being and self-sufficiency of nations, aligning with the broader goals of the UN's development agenda.

7. Bibliography and useful links

- [Full article: Unintentional neo-colonialism? Three generations of trade and development relationship between EU and West Africa \(tandfonline.com\)](#)
- [What is Neocolonialism? | Definition, Examples & Analysis \(perlego.com\)](#)
- [Colonialism - Wikipedia](#)
- [Neocolonialism | Definition, Examples, & Facts | Britannica](#)
- [Neo-Colonialism in West Africa | African Affairs | Oxford Academic \(oup.com\)](#)
- [The UN Sustainable Development Goals and Neo-Colonialism | SpringerLink](#)
- [The United Nations and Decolonization |](#)