

## Neocolonialism

**Neocolonialism** is a term used by late 20th century critics of [developed countries](#)' involvement in the developing world. Critics of neocolonialism argue that existing or past [international economic](#) arrangements created by former [colonial powers](#) were used to maintain control of their former colonies and dependencies after the [colonial independence movements](#) of the post [World War II](#) period. The term *Neocolonialism* can combine a critique of current *actual* colonialism (where some states continue administrating foreign territories and their populations in violation of United Nations resolutions) and a critique of modern [capitalist](#) businesses involvement in nations which were former colonies. Critics of neocolonialism contend that private, foreign business companies continue to exploit the resources of post-colonial peoples, and that this economic control inherent to neocolonialism is akin to the classical, European [colonialism](#) practiced from the [16th](#) to the [20th](#) centuries. In broader usage, current especially in [Latin America](#), Neocolonialism may simply refer to involvement of powerful countries in the affairs of less powerful countries. In this sense, "Neo"colonialism implies a form of contemporary, economic [Imperialism](#): that powerful nations behave like colonial powers, and that this behavior is *likened to* colonialism in a post-colonial world.

### Neocolonialism charges against former colonial powers

The term neocolonialism first saw widespread use, particularly in reference to [Africa](#), soon after the process of [decolonization](#) which followed a struggle by many national [independence](#) movements in the colonies following [World War II](#). Upon gaining independence, some national leaders and opposition groups argued that their countries were being subjected to a new form of colonialism, waged by the former colonial powers and other developed nations. [Kwame Nkrumah](#), who in 1957 became leader of newly independent [Ghana](#), expounded this idea in his *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, in 1965.

### Pan-African and Nonaligned movements

The term neocolonialism was popularised in the wake of [decolonialisation](#), largely through the activities of scholars and leaders from the newly independent states of Africa and the [Pan-Africanist](#) movement. Many of these leaders came together with those of other post colonial states at the [Bandung Conference](#) of 1955, leading to the formation of the [Non-Aligned Movement](#). The [All-African Peoples' Conference](#) (AAPC) meetings of the late 1950s and early 1960s spread this critique of neocolonialism. Their [Tunis](#) conference of 1960 and [Cairo](#) conference of 1961 specified their opposition to what they labeled neocolonialism, singling out the [French Community](#) of independent states organised by the former colonial power. In its four page *Resolution on Neocolonialism* is cited as a landmark for having presented a collectively arrived at definition of **neocolonialism** and a description of its main features. Throughout the [Cold War](#), the [Non-Aligned Movement](#), as well as organisations like the [Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America](#) defined neocolonialism as a primary collective enemy of these independent states.

Denunciations of neocolonialism also became popular with some national independence movements while they were still waging anti-colonial armed struggle. During the [1970s](#), in the [Portuguese](#) colonies of [Mozambique](#) and [Angola](#) for example, the rhetoric espoused by the [Marxist](#) movements [FRELIMO](#) and [MPLA](#), which were to eventually assume power upon those nations' independence, rejected both traditional colonialism and neocolonialism.

### Paternalistic neocolonialism

The term **paternalistic neocolonialism** involves the belief held by a neo-colonial power that their colonial subjects benefit from their occupation. Critics of neocolonialism, arguing that this is both exploitative and racist, contend this is merely a justification for continued political hegemony and economic exploitation of past colonies, and that such justifications are the modern reformulation of the [Civilizing mission](#) concepts of the 19th century.

### Françafrique



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Foreign mercenaries, like these United States and British veterans training anti-insurgency troops in [Sierra Leone](#), are often accused of being instruments of Neocolonial powers. French government minister [Jacques Foccart](#) was alleged to have used mercenaries like [Bob Denard](#) to maintain friendly governments or overthrow unfriendly governments in France's former colonies.

The classic example used to define modern neocolonialism is [Françafrique](#): a term that refers to the continuing close relationship between France and some leaders of its former African colonies. It was first used by president of the Côte d'Ivoire [Félix Houphouët-Boigny](#), who appears to have used it in a positive sense, to refer to good relations between France and Africa, but it was subsequently borrowed by critics of this close (and they would say) unbalanced relationship. [Jacques Foccart](#), who from 1960 was chief of staff for African matters for president [Charles de Gaulle](#) (1958–69) and then [Georges Pompidou](#) (1969–1974), is claimed to be the leading exponent of Françafrique. The term was coined by François-Xavier Verschave as the title of his criticism of French policies in Africa: *La Françafrique, The longest Scandal of the Republic*.

In 1972, [Mongo Beti](#), a writer in exile from [Cameroon](#) published *Main basse sur le Cameroun, autopsie d'une décolonisation* ('Cruel hand on Cameroon, autopsy of a decolonization'), a critical history of recent Cameroon, which asserted that Cameroon and other colonies remained under French control in all but name, and that the post-independence political elites had actively fostered this continued dependence.

Verschave, Beti and others point to a forty year post independence relationship with nations of the former African colonies, whereby French troops maintain forces on the ground (often used by friendly African leaders to quell revolts) and French corporations maintain monopolies on foreign investment (usually in the form of extraction of natural resources). French troops in Africa were (and it is argued, still are) often involved in [coup d'états](#) resulting in a regime acting in the interests of France but against its country's own interests.

Those leaders closest to France (particularly during the [Cold War](#), are presented in this critique as agents of continued French control in Africa. Those most often mentioned are [Omar Bongo](#), president of [Gabon](#), [Félix Houphouët-Boigny](#), former president of [Côte d'Ivoire](#), [Gnassingbé Eyadéma](#), former president of [Togo](#), [Denis Sassou-Nguesso](#), of the [Republic of the Congo](#), [Idriss Déby](#), president of [Chad](#), and [Hamani Diori](#) former president of [Niger](#).

## Francophonie

The [French Community](#) and the later [Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie](#) are defined by critics as agents of French neocolonial influence, especially in Africa. While the main thrust of this claim is that the Francophonie organisation is a front for French dominance of post-colonial nations, the relation with the French language is often more complex. [Algerian](#) intellectual [Kateb Yacine](#) wrote in 1966 that "Francophony is a neocolonial political machine, which only perpetuates our alienation, but the usage of French language does not mean that one is an agent of a foreign power, and I write in French to tell the French that I am not French".

## Belgian Congo

After a hastened [decolonization](#) process of the [Belgian Congo](#), [Belgium](#) continued to control, through The [Société Générale de Belgique](#), roughly 70% of the Congolese economy following the decolonization process. The most contested part was in the province of [Katanga](#) where the [Union Minière du Haut Katanga](#), part of the Société, had control over the mineral and resource rich province. After a failed attempt to [nationalize](#) the mining industry in the [1960s](#), it was reopened to foreign investment.

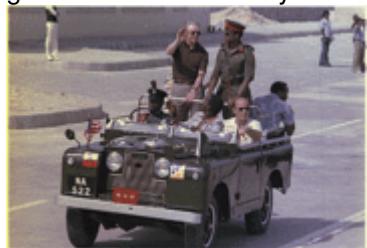
## United Kingdom

Critics of British relations with its former African colonies point out that the United Kingdom viewed itself as a "civilizing force" bringing "progress" and modernization to its colonies. This mindset, they argue, has enabled continued military and economic dominance in some of its former colonies, and has been seen again following British intervention in [Sierra Leone](#).

### Neocolonialism as economic dominance



United States President [Harry S. Truman](#) greets [Mohammad Mosaddeq](#), Prime Minister of Iran, 1951. Mosaddeq, who had begun nationalising US and British owned oil companies in Iran, was removed from power on August 19, 1953, in a coup d'état, supported and funded by the British and U.S. governments and led by General [Fazlollah Zahedi](#).



US President [Jimmy Carter](#) and Lt. Gen. [Olusegun Obasanjo](#) tour [Lagos, Nigeria](#). April, 1978. Obasanjo had come to power in a coup three years earlier, and as an oil rich state, courted both sides in the [Cold War](#).

In broader usage the charge of Neocolonialism has been leveled at powerful countries and transnational economic institutions who involve themselves in the affairs of less powerful countries. In this sense, "Neo"colonialism implies a form of contemporary, economic [Imperialism](#): that powerful nations behave *like* colonial powers, and that this behavior is *likened to* colonialism in a post-colonial world.

In lieu of direct [military-political](#) control, neocolonialist powers are said to employ economic, financial, and trade policies to dominate less powerful countries. Those who subscribe to the concept maintain this amounts to a [de facto](#) control over less powerful nations (see [Immanuel Wallerstein's World Systems Theory](#)).

Both previous colonizing states and other powerful economic states maintain a continuing presence in the economies of former colonies, especially where it concerns [raw materials](#). Stronger nations are thus charged with interfering in the governance and economics of weaker nations to maintain the flow of such material, at prices and under conditions which unduly benefit developed nations and trans-national corporations.

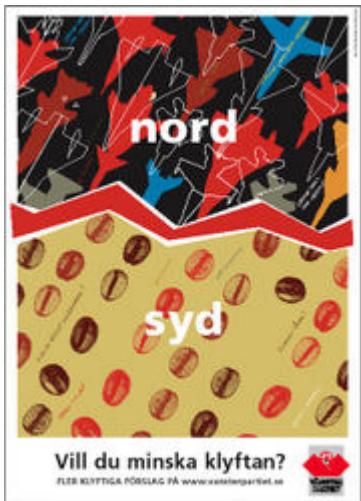
## Dependency theory

The concept of economic neocolonialism was given a theoretical basis, in part, through the work of [Dependency theory](#). This body of social science theories, both from developed and developing nations, is predicated on the notion that there is a center of wealthy states and a periphery of poor, underdeveloped states. Resources are extracted from the periphery and flow towards the states at the center in order to sustain their economic growth and wealth. A central concept is that the poverty of the countries in the periphery is the result of the manner of their integration of the "world system", a view to be contrasted with that of free market economists, who argue that such states are progressing on a path to full integration. This theory is based on the Marxist analysis of inequalities within the world system, dependency argues that underdevelopment of the Global South is a direct result of the development in the Global North.

The basis of much of this Marxist theory is in theories of the "[semi-colony](#)", which date back to the late 19th century.

Proponents of such theories include [Federico Brito Figueroa](#) a [Venezuelan](#) historian who has written widely on the socioeconomic underpinnings of both colonialism and neocolonialism. Brito's works and theories strongly influenced the thinking of current Venezuelan president [Hugo Chávez](#).

### The Cold War



Poster from the [Swedish Socialist Vänsterpartiet](#), 2002. Some on the left see all capitalist states as inherently imperialistic. The term **Neocolonialism** is often used to describe the relationship for North (developed nations), with South (developing nations).

In the late 20th century conflict between the [Soviet Union](#) and the [United States](#), the charge of **Neocolonialism** was often aimed at Western (and less often, Soviet) involvement in the affairs of developing nations. [Proxy Wars](#), many in former colonised nations, were funded by both sides throughout this period. [Cuba](#), the Soviet bloc, Egypt under [Nasser](#), as well as some governments of newly independent African states, charged the United States with supporting regimes which they felt did not represent the will of their peoples, and by means both covert and overt, toppling governments which rejected the United States. The [Tricontinental Conference](#), chaired by Moroccan politician [Mehdi Ben Barka](#) was one such organisation. Roughly designated as part of the [Third World](#) movement, it supported [revolutionary anti-colonial](#) action in various states, provoking the anger of the [United States](#) and [France](#). Ben Barka himself led what was called the *Commission on Neocolonialism* of the organisation, which focused both on the involvement of former colonial powers in post colonial states, but also contended that the United States, as leader of the capitalist world, with the primary Neocolonialist power. Much speculation remains about Ben Barka disappearance in 1965. The Tricontinental Conference was succeeded organisation such as [Cuba's OSPAAAL](#) (Spanish for "Organization for Solidarity with the People of Africa, Asia and Latin America"). Such organisations, feeding into what became the [Non-aligned Movement](#) of the 1960s and 70s used Neocolonialism, in much the same way as Marxist dependency theory intellectuals did, to encompass all capitalist nations,

and most especially the [United States](#). This usage remains popular on the political left today, most especially in [Latin America](#).

### Multinational corporations

Critics of neocolonialism also attempt to demonstrate that investment by [multinational corporations](#) enriches few in underdeveloped countries, and causes [humanitarian](#), [environmental](#) and [ecological](#) devastation to the populations which inhabit the *neocolonies*. This, it is argued, results in [unsustainable development](#) and perpetual underdevelopment; a [dependency](#) which cultivates those countries as reservoirs of cheap labor and raw materials, while restricting their access to advanced production techniques to develop their own economies.

### Defence of investment

Proponents of ties which critics have labeled *neocolonial* argue that, while the [First World](#) does profit from cheap labor and raw materials in [underdeveloped nations](#), ultimately, it does serve as a positive [modernizing](#) force for development in the [Third World](#).

### International financial institutions



[World Bank protester, Jakarta Indonesia, 2004.](#)

Critics of neocolonialism portray the choice to grant or to refuse granting loans (particularly those financing otherwise unpayable [Third World debt](#)), especially by international financial institutions such as the [International Monetary Fund](#) (IMF), and the [World Bank](#) (WB), as a decisive form of control. They argue that in order to qualify for these loans, and other forms of economic aid, weaker nations are forced to take certain steps favorable to the financial interests of the IMF and World Bank but detrimental to their own economies. These *structural adjustments* have the effect of increasing rather than alleviating poverty within the nation. Some critics emphasize that neocolonialism allows certain cartels of [states](#), such as the World Bank, to control and exploit usually lesser developed countries (LDCs) by fostering debt. In effect, [third world](#) governments give concessions and [monopolies](#) to foreign [corporations](#) in return for consolidation of power and monetary bribes. In most cases, much of the money loaned to these LDCs is returned to the favored foreign corporations. Thus, these foreign loans are in effect subsidies to corporations of the loaning state's. This collusion is sometimes referred to as the *corporatocracy*. Organizations accused of participating in neo-imperialism include the [World Bank](#), [World Trade Organization](#) and [Group of Eight](#), and the [World Economic Forum](#). Various "first world" states, notably the [United States](#), are said to be involved, as described in [Confessions of an Economic Hitman](#) by John Perkins.

### Neocolonialism allegations against the IMF

Those who argue that neocolonialism historically supplemented (and later supplanted) colonialism, point to the fact that Africa today pays more money every year in [debt](#) service payments to the IMF and World Bank than it receives in loans from them, thereby often depriving the inhabitants of those countries from actual necessities. This dependency, they maintain, allows the [IMF](#) and [World Bank](#) to impose Structural Adjustment Plans upon these nations. Adjustments largely consisting of [privatization](#) programs which they say result in deteriorating health, education, an inability to develop infrastructure, and in general, lower living standards.

They also point to recent statements made by [United Nations Secretary-General](#)'s Special Economic Adviser, Dr. Jeffrey Sachs, who heatedly demanded that the entire African debt (approximately \$200 billion) be forgiven outright and recommended that African nations simply stop paying if the World Bank and IMF do not reciprocate:

The time has come to end this charade. The debts are unaffordable. If they won't cancel the debts I would suggest obstruction; you do it yourselves. Africa should say: 'thank you very much but we need this money to meet the needs of children who are dying right now so we will put the debt servicing payments into urgent social investment in health, education, drinking water, control of AIDS and other needs.' (Professor [Jeffrey Sachs](#), Director of The Earth Institute at [Columbia University](#) and Special Economic Advisor to UN Secretary General [Kofi Annan](#)).

Critics of the IMF have conducted studies as to the effects of its policy which demands [currency devaluations](#). They pose the argument that the IMF requires these devaluations as a condition for refinancing loans, while simultaneously insisting that the loan be repaid in dollars or other [First World](#) currencies against which the underdeveloped country's currency had been devalued. This, they say, increases the respective debt by the same percentage of the currency being devalued, therefore amounting to a scheme for keeping [Third World](#) nations in perpetual indebtedness, impoverishment and neocolonial dependence.

### Other approaches to the concept of neocolonialism

Although the concept of neocolonialism was developed by [Marxists](#) and is generally employed by the political [left](#), the term **Neocolonialism** is also used within other theoretical frameworks.

#### Cultural theory

One variant of neocolonialism theory suggests the existence of [cultural colonialism](#), the alleged desire of wealthy nations to control other nations' values and perceptions through cultural means, such as [media](#), [language](#), [education](#) and [religion](#), purportedly ultimately for economic reasons.

One element of this is a critique of "[Colonial Mentality](#)" which writers have traced well beyond the legacy of 19th century colonial empires. These critics argue that people, once subject to colonial or imperial rule, latch onto physical and cultural differences between the foreigners and themselves, leading some to associate power and success with the *foreigners' ways*. This eventually leads to the *foreigners' ways* being regarded as the *better way* and being held in a higher esteem than previous indigenous ways. In much the same fashion, and with the same reasoning of *better-ness*, the colonised may over time equate the colonisers' race or ethnicity itself as being responsible for their *superiority*. Cultural rejections of colonialism, such as the [Negritude](#) movement, or simply the embracing of seemingly *authentic* local culture are then seen in a post colonial world as a necessary part of the struggle against domination. By the same reasoning, importation or continuation of cultural mores or elements from former colonial powers may be regarded as a form of Neocolonialism.