Neo-colonialism, Nkrumah and Africa-Europe ties

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Introduction

Neo-colonialism is a contested but highly relevant concept for making sense of North-South relations in the twenty-first century. Primarily associated with the work of Kwame Nkrumah (1965), the first President of an independent Ghana, the concept points to the ongoing economic and political domination of nominally independent developing countries by external powers. In the case of Nkrumah (1965), this clearly highlighted the dangers for legally independent African states in the immediate advent of decolonization, and beyond. African countries in the sway of neo-colonialism would enjoy what Julius Nyerere (Nkrumah’s Tanzanian counterpart) termed a mere “flag independence.” They would enjoy legal recognition and thus de jure sovereignty in terms of the Westphalian international system of states (Langan 2017, 10). For example, they would obtain a seat in the United Nations (UN) General Assembly. However, their economic systems and political decision-making processes would continue to be determined by outside interests. Decolonization in Africa, if perverted by neo-colonialism, thus would become a hollow entity, only to be meaningfully completed in full once neo-colonial forces – and the African elites in their sway – had been overcome.

In historical terms, this concept came to reflect Nkrumah’s – and that of other notable contemporaries such as Frantz Fanon (1961) and Sekou Touré (1962) – belief that European former colonial powers (in particular) would not willingly divest from lucrative African economies. Nor would they allow newly independent governments to exercise genuinely autonomous political programmes – especially in terms of foreign policy in the context of the Cold War. Witnessing the downfall of Patrice Lumumba in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) – with the USA and Belgium utilizing separatist forces in Katanga as an instrument of influence – had an especially marked effect upon the outlook of leading African politicians and intellectuals in the early 1960s. Notably, the fall of Lumumba heavily influenced and coincided with the publication of Frantz Fanon’s The Wretched of the Earth (1961 – the same year as Lumumba’s death). The publication of Nkrumah’s own key text Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism in 1965 also reflected his analysis of those recent events, namely the Katanga separatist crisis in the DRC. Nkrumah himself later faced being overthrown in a USA-backed coup d’etat in 1966.
In this context, the chapter examines the claims made by Nkrumah (1965) and his diagnosis of the strategies and functioning of neo-colonial forms of relations between African polities and external powers. This focuses upon his concerns surrounding the role of aid monies and foreign investment in subverting genuine empirical sovereignty. Moreover, how aid involved and facilitated the appropriation of economic resources as well as the adjacent co-optation of African political leaderships. It then demonstrates the ongoing relevance of the concept of neo-colonialism for making sense of current-day controversies associated with “development” in the African continent. Specifically, it focuses upon the European Union (EU)’s securitization of its “development” policies in Africa vis-à-vis so-called “failed states” and migration flows. It demonstrates that Nkrumah’s concerns regarding the subversion of African elites via aid monies (and indeed military interventions in the case of the Sahel) remain relevant to the analysis of Africa-EU ties today. Finally, the chapter concludes with a reiteration of the key claims of Nkrumah regarding the operation of neo-colonial forms of North-South relations. It also reflects on Nkrumah’s discussion of the potential solutions to the problem of neo-colonialism, namely contemporary possibilities for pan-African strategies aimed at overcoming neo-colonial influence and relationships.

**Neo-colonialism as concept, and as form of North-South relations**

Nkrumah’s (1965) key text *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* provides a searing account of his concerns regarding the actions of Western powers (in particular) in denuding a genuine, empirical sovereignty in newly independent African countries. Having fought against colonial forces to obtain Ghanaian independence – the first African state to formally overthrow colonial rule – in 1957, Nkrumah remained wary of the motivations of the former colonial powers in London and Paris, as well as the intentions of the USA in the Cold War period. Coinciding with his efforts as part of the Casablanca Group of African states to achieve a federation of African polities within a Union of African States, Nkrumah’s text chiefly warned of the dangers that individual, isolated African countries would face in the immediate period of decolonization (c.f. Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013, 69–70). In historical terms, meanwhile, the publication of his text in 1965 did much to sour already tense relations between his government in Accra and that of Western powers. It is not a coincidence that Nkrumah was deposed the following year in a USA-backed military coup d’état.

In terms of the practice and operation of neo-colonial relationships between external powers and African countries, meanwhile, Nkrumah (1965) articulately identified the hazards of aid-giving for the empirical sovereignty of newly independent countries. He warned that aid (for the most part) was not a benevolent or disinterested humanitarian gesture on the part of external nations, inspired by a genuine concern for the condition of African populations. Rather aid was a device utilized by foreign countries to gain leverage over domestic African elites, and to co-opt African politicians into serving the political interests of outside interests. Aid therefore was a corrupting mechanism – used to gain African leaders’ acquiescence to economic and political alliances – even if such relations were to the detriment of their own countries’ longer-term economic growth or to their polities’ genuine political sovereignty. In clear terms, Nkrumah (1965, ix) wrote that:

Control over government policy in the neo-colonial state may be secured by payments towards the costs of running the state, by the provision of civil servants in positions where they can dictate policy, and by monetary control over foreign exchange through the imposition of a banking system controlled by the imperialist power

*(1965, xi)*
Aid monies, in this context, would in fact accrue even greater profits and finances for the external power in question. That is, the external aid-giver would more than recoup their initial expenditure in terms of aid, since those monies would help to lock-in African polities into subservient economic relationships in which their raw materials continued to be extracted – and processed – to the benefit of outside corporations and states:

“Aid” therefore to a neo-colonial state is merely a revolving credit, paid by the neo-colonial master, passing through the neo-colonial state and returning to the neo-colonial master in the form of increased profits

(1965, xv)

Notably, however, Nkrumah did recognize here the double-bind in which certain counterparts of his might find themselves in the immediate advent of decolonization. Namely, that colonization had left African countries with unbalanced economic systems predicated upon the export of valuable raw materials to the metropole, and had left them so impoverished, that short-term aid monies (although maintaining neo-colonial relations) did sometimes seem a preferable option to the politics of austerity and hardship which would otherwise befall (at least for a transitional period), any African country seeking to break the chains of neo-colonial linkages. He wrote on this front that:

[the] hesitancy [of African states to cut ties to former colonisers] is fostered by the sugared water of aid; which is the stop-gap between avid hunger and the hoped-for greater nourishment which never comes. As a result, we find that imperialism, having quickly adapted its outlook to the loss of direct political control, has retained and extended its economic grip

(1965, 33)

Nkrumah thus lamented that many African leaders would take the offer of aid for short-term political gain, namely patronage and graft lubricated by aid monies. This in turn would stave off harder economic decisions associated with a break from neo-colonialism.

Interestingly here, Nkrumah (1965, 1–5) emphasized that foreign governments would work alongside their corporate entities – and vice versa. Namely, that foreign corporations would mobilise their governments in order to safeguard their economic interests in the African continent. Nkrumah, however, did not condemn all forms of foreign direct investment (FDI). He noted that FDI if properly regulated by African governments and directed towards national development plans and objectives might be a boon to economic diversification (ibid). Foreign companies might bring necessary technologies and capital, as well as labour know-how. Nevertheless, Nkrumah did foresee the perpetuation of predatory forms of foreign corporate engagement in Africa, primarily in terms of extractive enclave economies inherited from the era of formal colonialism (ibid). Such industries would do little to help African economies move on to processing and to the foundation of new service industries, and would instead pillage raw materials while offering little to local workers or host communities surrounding business operation. Foreign aid – often mobilized by corporate lobbying – would help ensure though that certain African elites would acquiesce to the status quo, particularly if these elites financially gained from the neo-colonial economic relationship through personal profit and shares (graft).

It is necessary to recognize, however, that Nkrumah (1965, 33–35) did not view corrupted African elites as automatons, bereft of agency or their own decision-making capacity. Again, he not only emphasized that many elites acquiesced to neo-colonial power structures for want of the...
will to bring about an austerity politics that might, in the short term, commence when breaking from colonial economic patterns. He also emphasized that deliberate political calculations entered into the equation, as elites in newly emerging polities sought to stabilize their rule and to gain finances to buoy clients. This would mean though, for Nkrumah, that these elites would have very little interest in assisting their own populations in terms of gaining education (which might then provoke them to resent and resist neo-colonialism) or to foster better labour conditions (which might deter and embitter foreign corporations whose governments provided foreign aid):

The rules of the neo-colonial states derive their authority to govern… from the support which they obtain from their neo-colonialist masters. They have therefore little interest in developing education, strengthening the bargaining power of their workers employed by expatriate firms, or indeed of taking any step which would challenge the colonial pattern of commerce…. [which] is the object of neo-colonialism to preserve

(1965, 1)

Nkrumah thus viewed neo-colonialism as a two-way relationship between elites in London, Brussels and Washington (and beyond) and their counterparts in certain African capital cities in the era of decolonization and Cold War power politicking.

As mentioned in the introduction, meanwhile, it is also clear that Nkrumah did not stand alone in terms of this critical analysis of asymmetric North-South relations. Frantz Fanon (1961), partly inspired by Nkrumah’s successes in the overthrow of colonialism in Ghana, and concerned with the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in DRC, wrote eloquently about his own views regarding the neo-colonial danger. Fanon first emphasized what he saw as the vindictiveness of foreign colonial powers who sought to stifle newly emerging African countries from the very outset of independence:

You may see colonialism withdrawing its capital and its technicians and setting up around the young state the apparatus of economic pressure. The apotheosis of independence is transformed into the curse of independence and the colonial power through its immense resources of coercion condemns the young nation to regression. In plain words, the colonial power says, ‘Since you want independence, take it and starve’.

(1961, 76)

Fanon emphasized that certain African elites would seek to make a success of a genuine independence free from neo-colonial tutelage. However, this would again involve a (short-term) austerity as the country sought to make economic transitions away from colonial patterns of commerce, and to survive without the aid monies that otherwise had stabilized colonial economies (in the sense of staving off destitution):

The nationalist leaders have no other choice but to turn to their people and ask them for a gigantic effort. A regime of austerity is imposed on these starving men… and autarkic regime is set up and each state, with the miserable resources it has in hand, tries to find an answer to the nation’s great hunger and poverty. We see the mobilization of a people which toils to exhaustion in front of a suspicious and bloated Europe

(ibid)

Fanon also expressed, however, that other African elites would choose to take a path of least resistance and align themselves with former colonial powers within a system of neo-
colonialism. In this situation, aid monies would be forthcoming that would allow such elites to lubricate their patronage networks and to maintain themselves in government. This is despite the fact that their political autonomy as governors would be gravely undermined by the loss of empirical sovereignty involved within relations of neo-colonialism:

Other countries of the Third World refuse to undergo this ordeal [austerity regimes upon the withdrawal of aid] and agree to get over it by accepting the conditions of the former guardian power... The former dominated country becomes an economically dependent country. The ex-colonial power, which has kept in tact and sometimes even reinforced its colonialist trade channels agrees to provision the budget of the independent nation by small injections

(ibid)

Fanon therefore envisaged the neo-colonial predicament in which African elites would align themselves strategically to former colonial powers, irrespective of the inevitable diminution of economic and political sovereignty that such strategies would involve.

Importantly, the diagnosis of neo-colonialism – in keeping with an African socialist critique of decolonization processes – also found expression in the works of Nkrumah’s contemporaries – notably Julius Nyerere and Sekou Touré. Interestingly, the former of these leaders – the President of Tanzania, Nyerere – had been a leading figure within the Monrovia Group in the 1960s. This collection of gradualist African state leaderships argued for a loose confederal model of association between newly independent countries within the continent. This stood in opposition to the more radical stance of the Casablanca Group, led by Nkrumah, who called for the immediate formation of a federal Union of African States (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013, 69–70). Nyerere, however, toward the end of his tenure in the 1970s admitted that the success of the Monrovia Group’s own vision – embodied in the loose Organisation of African Unity (OAU) – had failed to meaningfully empower African countries against neo-colonial forces. In 1978, he lamented that the neo-colonial threat had not yet been overcome: “sooner or later, and for as long as necessary, Africa, will fight against neo-colonialism as it had fought against colonialism. And eventually it will win” (Nyerere 1978, 11–12). Sekou Touré, meanwhile, who had supported the more comprehensive vision of the Casablanca Group in the debates surrounding African unity in the 1960s, concurred much earlier with Nkrumah’s analysis of the neo-colonial danger. In 1962 he notably drew attention to the potential influence of foreign corporate entities over African political elites and the subordinate economic position in which many African states would continue to find themselves within global markets:

The direct colonial exploitation of former days is being succeeded by international monopolies, and this has a tendency to remain permanent. Paradoxically, it is the underdeveloped nations, exporting raw materials and crude products, which contribute an important share of the costs and social improvements from which workers in the fully developed countries benefit

(Touré 1962 148)

Neo-colonial forms of unbalanced trade, underpinned by aid as well as foreign corporate pressures upon African elites, would therefore pose a challenge to the social well-being of African citizenries even after decolonization had formally taken place.

Interestingly, both Touré (1962) and Nkrumah (1965) issued specific warnings to their political contemporaries in Francophone Africa about the dangers of concluding so-called
“Association” agreements with the then European Economic Community (EEC) in the 1960s. Association under the Yaoundé Conventions (1963–1975), according to the European Commission, would offer aid assistance toward poverty reduction in newly independent former colonies via the European Development Fund (EDF) (Brown 2000). Beneficial terms of trade would also be offered to African countries (the Francophone former colonies of Belgium and France), on the understanding that they remained open to foreign investment – particularly in lucrative extractive mineral sectors. Touré and Nkrumah argued, however, that Association would prove a Trojan Horse in relation to African countries’ genuine empirical independence from foreign tutelage. Both foresaw that European officials would make aid conditional upon the signing of disadvantageous trade agreements which would necessitate African countries to accept the influx of foreign products, to the detriment of their own infant industries. Industrialization would be impossible in the context of the import flooding of cheap European wares, to the collapse of local manufacturing capacities in African “Associates.”

Meanwhile, both leaders warned that European aid monies would corrupt African elites and also be used towards the subsidization of regressive forms of European corporate activity in dirty extractive sectors. Touré (1962) specifically warned that a Eurafrican Association would denigrate African states’ economic and political standing: “unconditional integration into a multinational market negates the possibility of industrial development in advance; it could only be the association of the rider and the horse.” Nkrumah (1965, 19) echoed these concerns and warned Francophone nations against “the collective colonialism of the European Common Market.” According to Segal (1964) writing in the timeframe of Eurafrican Association under the Yaoundé Accords:

President Nkrumah’s objections to associated status are both economic and ideological. According to him, associated states will perpetuate neo-colonialism and provide a fundamental obstacle to the achievement of African political and economic unity, which is the sole means whereby African states can overcome their lack of development.

In a contemporary context, the European Union (EU) stands similarly accused by a plethora of African civil society organisations of perpetuating neo-colonial forms of economic and political domination in the continent in the timeframe of the Cotonou Agreement (2000–2020) between the EU and African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states. Europe’s utilization of aid monies to coerce African governments into stringent policies regarding the securitisation of development in the case of so-called “fragile states,” and the concomitant stemming of migrant flows, has recently come under particular attention. The next section therefore highlights the EU’s securitisation of development as illustration of the contemporary relevance of the concept of neo-colonialism for making sense of current forms of North-South ties (in this case those between the EU and its African “Associates” in the timeframe of the Cotonou Agreement).

**Africa-EU relations: neo-colonialism and the securitisation of development**

It is important to recognise that European neo-colonialism in Africa is not limited to the pursuit of detrimental economic arrangements via premature trade liberalisation. Neo-colonial forms of EU-Africa relations also find expression in terms of the EU’s securitisation of its “development” agenda – largely focused upon the stabilisation of so-named “fragile states” and the stemming of irregular migration from African territories to the EU.
metropole. With regard to these policy objectives, the European Commission (2016, 2017, 2019) has steadfastly declared that it is primarily driven by a humanitarian ethos, focused upon the plight of poorer citizenries in Africa. EU efforts to stem violent conflict in Mali and Chad, for example, are discursively framed as moral interventions seeking to improve opportunities for poorer people in fragile states (EEAS 2019). And while there is discursive recognition in EU statements of the need to protect European citizenries in terms of a wider effort against Islamism and the incubation of terror groups, EU overseas efforts are routinely seen as evidence of a moral largesse from a benevolent partner to its weaker neighbours (EEAS 2018a). This humanitarian ethos also finds expression in the discourse surrounding “irregular migration” (EEAS 2018b). Again, EU officials make clear that they do not view such actions as zero-sum, that is, with African countries being disciplined by a paternalistic and self-interested Europe. Instead they view efforts to tackle migration under the Africa-EU Valletta Action Plan as evidence of Europe’s genuine concern for the plight of (predominantly) young men who might otherwise perish on dangerous journeys across the Sahara and the Mediterranean. As part of this discourse, EU efforts to tackle “the root causes of irregular migration” regularly highlight the need to create jobs and prosperity in African states in order to incentivise young people to remain in their countries of origin rather than seek new lives and opportunities within the EU member states (ibid).

Despite these reassuring narratives, however, it is clear that EU interventions can be classified as “neo-colonial” in the sense of re-asserting Europe’s economic and political dominance through coercive aid strategies which denude genuine empirical state sovereignty. The interventions of the EU – and its prominent member state, France – in the cases of “fragile states” such as Mali and Chad, for example, do much to illustrate the ethical problems associated with an EU neo-colonial prerogative in Africa in the contemporary era. Worryingly, France has routinely sought to bolster pliable elites in the region with a view to protecting its considerable economic interests, not least in terms of uranium supplies crucial for French nuclear energy conglomerates (Boeke and Bart 2015, 806). As part of this effort, France alongside the EU and multilateral bodies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have channelled aid monies to Sahelian politicians on the understanding that they adhere to neoliberal economic norms relating to market openness and acceptance of foreign investment. In the case of Mali, where a French military intervention took place from 2011 to 2013 against northern rebels, Charbonneau and Sears (2014, 201) explain that such economic prescriptions in fact engendered the social instability and national fragmentation that led to the outbreak of crisis in the first instance:

These political elites oversaw the past two decades of Mali’s tutelage by the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and major bilateral donors such as France, a period marked by excessive executive dominance and a minimalist and procedural vision of democratization as electoralism to support ‘good governance’ for international financial institutions-mandated economic liberalization and development initiatives. Thus, liberalizing governance in Mali prior to the events of 2011–13 had further centralized power, concentrated wealth and intensified socio-economic cleavages, especially between rural and urban populations, but also among classes within urban area.

French and EU claims to therefore support “fragile states” through benevolent intervention in civil conflicts such as that of Mali in 2011–13 are therefore somewhat paradoxical given the role of both Paris and Brussels in promoting neoliberal economic reforms inimical to
social peace in the Sahel. The dangers therefore of such neo-colonial aid relations for local populations become wholly apparent.

In Central Africa, meanwhile, EU support for the regime of Joseph Kabila in the DRC – again with the geopolitical interests of Paris at stake – has been framed in terms of the need to assist a so-called fragile state to achieve greater social and economic prosperity (Gegout 2009, 235). France, meanwhile, has emphasised the position of the DRC within the “Francophonie” in order to legitimise its own lead role vis-à-vis military interventions, notably in Operation Artemis in 2003 under an EU banner (France Diplomatie 2018). It has also emphasised its close ties to DRC in order to legitimise its commentary surrounding the political situation in the country – most recently to condemn alleged electoral fraud and the inauguration of Felix Tshisekedi, a long-time political foe of Joseph Kabila (The Guardian 2019). This French condemnation of the electoral process is in the context of a longer running dispute about the running of the elections (between the DRC and its European partners), resulting in the expulsion of the EU representative from DRC in December 2018 – an episode broadcast live on a state channel (Politico 2018). The close alignment between Paris and Brussels in this instance evidences a co-operative element among European elites within EU neo-colonial interventions in Africa. And France’s use of military intervention and aid money to buttress Joseph Kabila (and therein French economic interests) would point once more to a situation of infringed empirical sovereignty. Indeed, in the lead up to the 2018 presidential elections Kabila himself warned that the country must be vigilant about EU interventions in the political affairs of the nation, especially in the transition of power (BBC 2017).

Nevertheless, the case of the DRC also points to potential competitive elements of neo-colonialism in terms of Western “core” nations’ conflicting imperial prerogatives in Africa. Notably, at the outbreak of the Second Congo War in 1998, Western actors – including EU member states, Britain and France – were divided in terms of their support, with some backing then President Laurent Kabila in Kinshasa, while others supporting the interventions of Rwanda and Uganda. Gegout (2009) usefully explains that when the:

second Congolese war broke out in 1998, Western actors continued to support the leaders of their traditional zones of influence. France supported the DRC, whereas the United States and the UK backed Rwanda and Uganda. This rivalry between the Western powers, and their lack of impartiality, were not conducive to ending the war.

In the most recent phase of DRC politics – namely the election of Felix Tshisekedi – the potential for external power competition within systems of neo-colonialism again come to a head – not least in terms of the ability of China (given its historical policy of non-interference) to support a president otherwise denounced by core Western states. Indeed, external powers will inevitably weigh their geopolitical and commercial interests in the DRC and its lucrative extractive sectors before actively undermining (or supporting) Tshisekedi’s rule.

With striking parallels to humanitarian EU discourse concerning fragile states, meanwhile, EU actions to stem irregular migration from Africa to its member states are publicly justified in terms of the developmental needs of African citizenries (European Commission 2017; EEAS 2018b). Federica Mogherini, the recent EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, claimed that the EU seeks to improve the welfare of African citizenries, and to therein deal with the “root causes” of migration stemming from North-South inequality:
We often talk about the root causes of migration, namely poverty, climate change. Let us call things with their names. We are talking about inequalities: an unequal distribution of wealth and resources around the world. This is what we are talking about when we talk about the root causes of migration – also conflicts and crises, and many of them are caused exactly by inequalities and unequal distribution of resources.

(Mogherini 2018b)

Mogherini thus stated the case for the EU to take seriously its interventions within a migration-development nexus.

Significantly in terms of a contemporary analysis of neo-colonialism, however, the EU has regularly conditioned its aid-giving in Africa with regard to migration partnership agreements with individual African states. This chimes with the rationale of the wider Africa-EU Valletta Action Plan which stipulates the need for African governments to actively assist the EU in its efforts to stem irregular migration – lubricated by promised aid funds (Toaldo and Barana 2016). Such aid conditionality has been condemned by Western non-governmental organisations (NGOs) including Oxfam (2017) and CONCORD (2018) who query the securitisation of development as embodied in the marriage of aid monies to migration management efforts (driven by EU member state antipathy to African migration). Moreover, African NGOs themselves – including the West African Observatory on Migrations (WAOM) and the Pan African Network for the Defense of Migrants’ Rights (PANiDMR), have called for pan-African strategies to counteract the invidious way in which EU aid monies have incentivised African governments to step up surveillance of their own populations vis-à-vis irregular migration:

The lure of European financial aid to fight against migration transforms the African political authorities in real persecutors of their brothers and sisters who are looking for work to live and feed their families... The European Union, at the expense of its humanist values... outsources its security migration policy. African civil society calls for the African Union commission, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and all African heads of state to... engage resolutely in a real regional integration process. Only a true African integration could prevent our countries to always be the instrument of European policy.

(WAOM-PANiDMR Joint Statement 2016)

In keeping with the rationale of Nkrumah (1965), pan-African solidarity is viewed as the best means for combating EU security strategies masquerading as “development” interventions in the context of irregular migration flows.

Having examined EU efforts in the case of so-called fragile states and migration, it does become clear that the EU is enacting a form of neo-colonial domination in its dealings with African countries. Clearly in the case of military intervention in the case of Mali and the DRC, European states cement their own geopolitical and commercial interests, even in situations where social instability has been precipitated by neoliberal economic reforms advocated by Western “core” nations. Following Nkrumah (1965), it would appear that the EU is engaging in neo-colonial strategies, with the utilisation of aid monies as a means of subverting genuine empirical sovereignty through support to pliable client elites. Rather than understand problems of African development through the sole prism of “corruption,” therefore, it is incumbent upon scholars to understand how state “fragility” and the root causes of migration can be directly traced to the neo-colonial policies pursued by “development” donors themselves.
Conclusion

As this discussion has illustrated, the work of Nkrumah (1965) – alongside that of his notable contemporaries Fanon (1961) and Touré (1962) – remain vital to a contemporary understanding of neo-colonialism. Highlighting the corrupting use of aid monies to pervert genuine political sovereignty and economic systems in Africa, the concept of neo-colonialism calls attention to the misuses of donor “development” policy. Moreover, following the work of Nkrumah, the concept also draws attention to the role of corporate entities in pressuring their home nations to utilise aid monies in such regressive fashion – namely to ensure ongoing access to lucrative raw materials. Nkrumah’s analysis, meanwhile, also reminds us to examine forms of African agency – either to resist or to embrace systems of neo-colonialism – and to understand the potential motivations of elites in their dealings with former colonial powers.

Additionally, the discussion of contemporary EU policies towards so-called “failed states” and in relation to the stemming of migration from Africa illustrates the contemporary resonance of Nkrumah’s analysis of neo-colonial dilemmas. Just as Nkrumah – and Touré – warned of the dangers of Eurafrique in the timeframe of the Yaoundé Conventions (1963–1975), contemporary EU policies in the timeframe of the Cotonou Agreement (2000–2020) continue to undermine empirical sovereignty in sub-Saharan Africa. Following Nkrumah, therefore, African leaderships – as well as civil society groups and trade union coalitions – would do well to heed his advice regarding the best avenue for overcoming neo-colonial influence. Namely, following the leanings of the Casablanca Group of states in the debates surrounding African unity in the 1960s, contemporary African political decision-makers would do well to pursue pan-African solutions to neo-colonialism in the continent.

References

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