

**Forum:** The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL)

**Issue:** Decolonization and the Quest for African Sovereignty: Strategies for Addressing Historical Injustices and Fostering Post-Colonial Development

**Name:** Aniket Tripathi

**Position:** Head Chair

**Introduction:**



The issue of decolonisation in Africa has been a multifaceted process, largely due to the historical injustices faced by sovereign African nations during the 18th and 19th centuries (colonial period). Starting in the 1880s, in what became known as the “Scramble for Africa”, European countries occupied the continent of Africa to achieve



strategic and resource-related gains. Certain means of occupying land across the continent included exploiting Africa's resources and people(slavery), imposing nation's governance systems, and often forcibly displacing people, cultures and traditions. In the mid-20th century, a series of political upheavals and movements sparked the start of decolonisation in Africa. The process was a signal of the end of foreign involvement in the continent, but to this day, the issue of colonialism persists, in the form of economic dependencies and the exploitation of resources.

### **Definition of Key Terms:**

1. **Decolonisation:** Refers to the process by which African nations freed themselves from colonisers.
2. **Sovereignty:** (Oxford Dictionaries)The authority of a state to govern itself.
3. **Structural Adjustment Programs(SAPs):** Economic policies imposed by international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund(IMF), on developing nations, including many African countries, can lead to economic reforms and privatisation in industries.
4. **Pan-Africanism:** An ideology that promotes creating a sense of brotherhood and collaboration among all people of African descent.
5. **Colonialism:** The control of one power over an area or people/s who are dependent. In this context, it is referring to European control over many parts of Africa during the colonial period.

### **Background Information**

## **The Beginning of Colonialism in Africa**

The onset of colonialism in Africa was characterized by the artificial amalgamation of diverse nations within colonial territories. Spanning between the 18th and 19th centuries, this period also witnessed the rise of Pan-Africanism as an ideology that mobilised Africans against colonialism, a sentiment that endured even after the establishment of colonial nation-states. The economic interests of European nations in the 1800s were the leading cause for the beginning of colonialism in Africa. Specifically, the abundance of rubber, timber, diamonds, and gold in Africa made the region extremely appealing to the Europeans due to the ability to exploit and export these resources to their advantage. These European nations included Britain, France, Belgium, Germany, Portugal, Italy, and Spain.

## **The impact of colonialism in Africa**

The major influence of colonialisation was causing the African nations to gain a high dependence on the Europeans who introduced a mono-cultural economy, with Africans having a high dependence on European imports. Additionally, the Europeans exploited African labour, by dehumanising the workforce forcing Africans to work in colonial plantations at very low wages. Furthermore, other forms of impact include cultural divide and overall social disruption. Moreover, the rise of corruption activities post-colonial era and the impact of colonialism on economic regionalism have been observed. The imposition of American and Chinese management practices in Africa has been examined, too, in the context of the experience of colonialism and the particular contextual circumstances of Africa. Additionally, the impact of colonialism on education,

governance systems, and the construction of juvenile delinquency during the colonial period has been explored (read more [here](#)).

### **The beginning of decolonisation endeavours in Africa**

The beginning of decolonisation endeavours in Africa can be traced back to World War II. This era saw the promise of development that asserted a clean rupture from the immediate past. The Bandung Spirit of Decolonization also played a significant role, framing decolonial theory and laying out the long-standing struggles for liberation from the Haitian Revolution to post-1945 decolonization and pan-African initiatives in Africa. Additionally, institutes of higher education have also seen a reform in the field of African studies, specifically in the sense that courses have been evolving to emphasise the need for decolonisation in Africa. These endeavours reflect a broader movement to dismantle colonial legacies and promote the idea of privatisation in Africa.

### **Current Situation**

### **Post-Colonial Challenges**

Africa continues to face challenges that have persisted over decades. Such challenges include political, social and economic dimensions, which reflect the enduring impact of colonialism in the post-colonial era. The biggest challenge that most African nations face today as a result of the impact of colonialism is political instability and governance issues. Corruption, political instability, exploitation and weak institutions have all contributed to weak governance systems all across Africa, to the point that nations such as South Sudan have ungoverned areas due to the misuse of resources and severe political instability. Despite most African nations being freed from their colonial eras, the

wealth gap between persons of differing wealth groups increased, with the rich getting richer, and the poor getting poorer. Despite natural resource wealth, governments in Africa fail to efficiently capitalise on the gifts of nature, leading to a severe lack of economic growth.

### **Cold War influence**

The Cold War era was characterized by geopolitical competition between the United States and the Soviet Union, and had a major impact on Africa. Competition for influence has led to the provision of aid and military support to various African states and powers allied with the superpower bloc. This support had a lasting effect because member states knew that aid would not stop during the Cold War as other superpower blocs would fill the gap. The Cold War also influenced the regional spread of military regimes in sub-Saharan Africa, dissolving the Cold War world order and making regional factors important in shaping the institutional landscape. The impact of the Cold War on African political culture was profound, and its legacy continues to influence diplomatic relations and the global political economy. Furthermore, the end of the Cold War brought about a major shift in the focus of US aid goals, reflecting shifts in international priorities and strategies. Most notably, the Cold War caused an “arms race” in Africa, both sides of the war supplied arms and military aid to their allies, many of which were African nations. This worsened conflicts and contributed to political instability in the continent.

### **Former colonial powers**

As previously mentioned, some of the colonial powers included Britain, France, Belgium, Germany, Portugal, Italy, etc. Many of these countries recognise that the implications of their actions were largely negative, and hence such colonial powers have offered apologies and reconciliation to African nations. However, this was not in the form of reparations, and as such, many stakeholders view these efforts to be insufficient. Former colonial powers now engage in trade with African nations, but criticisms of unequal trade relationships, exploitation through unfair pay and resources, and insufficient investment in development persist. Simultaneously, global actors have also provided development assistance in the form of humanitarian aid, infrastructural support, agricultural support and governance and institutional support(through practices aimed at improving governance structures and combatting corruption).

### **African nations**

After centuries of colonisation, African nations have prioritised sovereignty and self-determination. The overpowering view that the nations have is to have full control over the vast natural resources that they have access to and control over their own respective governance systems. A significant part of the views of these African states includes their desperation through calls for reparations and justice, as they seek acknowledgement for historical injustice and redress for the social and economic damages caused by colonial powers.

### **Major Parties Involved and Their Views**

#### **The United Kingdom:**

Great Britain was the largest colonial power in Africa during the colonial period, with 30% of Africa's population under its control between 1885 and 1914. Significant nations Britain had control over include; Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, Gambia, Sierra Leone, northwestern Somalia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, Nigeria, Ghana, and Malawi. Due to their high previous influence and exploitation in the region, they have been asked to provide reparations and an apology, alongside the other European states who also colonised Africa.

### **France:**

The second largest of the European countries who colonised Africa with 15% of Africa under their control, France is highly involved in this topic due to their previous actions in the region. The nations that France had control over include, in their current names; Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Dahomey, and Niger. Similar to the United Kingdom, France was highly involved in the exploitation of Africans and has been asked for reparations.

### **Nigeria:**

Nigeria is the most populous African nation, with 213.4 million people in 2021. Due to this, they were heavily influenced by colonialism, specifically by the British. Similar to other colonised African states, Nigeria's economy, culture and workforce took a large negative impact from British colonialism. Due to these factors, specifically the high population, and a rising economy, Nigeria has a large influence over African states as a whole and hence will be a crucial influence on this topic.

### **UN SPECPOL:**

This committee, the United Nations Special Political and Decolonization Committee is extremely involved with this topic due to its heavy influence on the

decolonisation of nations, as stated in the name. As this topic is being discussed in this committee, decolonisation efforts should be a major focus of debate.

### **UNSC:**

The UNSC (United Nations Security Council) could have high involvement in this topic. Because this topic focuses on African nation's sovereignty, if the issue were to escalate, the UNSC would need to be involved. This is due to the Security Council's heavy focus on protecting nation/s security and sovereignty.

### **UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events**

The UN has been involved in ways such as forming the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation (also known as the Committee of 24), which focused on monitoring the implementation of Resolution 1514(see below). Additionally, the UN constantly carries out peacekeeping missions to aid African nations in whatever way possible. An example of such a mission includes the military and humanitarian aid provided to the Central African Republic in the late 2010s after military tensions soared due to a shift of political power and conflict between religious groups. It is also known that the Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs) include addressing issues such as poverty, hunger and unfair economic opportunities. African nations stay actively involved in the implementation of these goals to foster development. The UN is also involved through treaties and international conventions, such as the Paris Agreement and the International Covent on Civil and Political Rights, which are somewhat tailored to the



needs of African nations and aim to support struggling nations in Africa in different ways.

- o UN General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) - Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (1960): Adopted on December 14, 1960.
  - This resolution established the right to self-determination for colonial countries and peoples and called for the end of colonialism. It provided a framework for decolonization efforts worldwide.
- o UN General Assembly Resolution 1654 (XVI) - Permanent sovereignty over natural resources (1961): Adopted on November 27, 1961.
  - This resolution established the Special Committee on the Situation about the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence of Colonial Countries and Peoples. This applies as the topic as a whole revolves around decolonisation.
- o UN Security Council Resolution 435 (1978) - Namibia Independence Plan: Adopted on September 29, 1978.
  - This resolution talks about the transfer of power back to Namibia from South Africa. This is mostly relevant as it shows an example of power being returned to a colonized state.
- o UN General Assembly Resolution 55/2 - Millennium Declaration (2000): Adopted on September 8, 2000.
  - This general assembly resolution focuses on disarming, Peace, security, human rights and the environment. In general, goals

towards peace and human rights will still aid nations harmed by colonialism.

- o UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1 - Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015): Adopted on September 25, 2015.
  - This resolution focuses generally on sustainable development goals, which would help aid nations who need to recover from colonialism.

### **Possible Solutions**

- Monitoring the implementation of Resolution 1514(see above)
- Consider encouraging former colonial powers to formally apologise to all affected African states.
- Addressing inequality and poverty: Bridging the gap between the rich and the poor by creating opportunities for individuals to prosper. Delegates could focus on providing funds to governments so they can support their population through support groups for those displaced by colonialism.
- Regional cooperation and integration: This looks like nations of the African Union coming together to create trade agreements and collaborative agreements.
- Addressing historical injustices to foster cultural preservation, through governments of affected nations providing official documents detailing their previous culture, and by funding efforts to restore their culture to the way it was before colonization.

- Empowering women and youth through scholarship programs, promoting gender equality, and youth involvement in change-making policies, agreements and economic activities.

## **Bibliography, Useful Links and Works Cited**

[Full article: Between the public intellectual and the scholar: decolonization and some post-independence initiatives in African higher education](#)

[African Anti-colonialism in International Relations: Against the Time of Forgetting | SpringerLink](#)

[Decolonizing both researcher and research and its effectiveness in Indigenous research - Ranjan Datta, 2018](#)

[What Contributions, if Any, Can Non-Indigenous Researchers Offer Toward Decolonizing Health Research? - Emily Krusz, Tamzyn Davey, Britta Wigginton, Nina Hall, 2020](#)

[European colonization of Africa - Students | Britannica Kids | Homework Help](#)

Extra: This 40-minute [YouTube video](#) is great for understanding the overall situation of the decolonisation of Africa.

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/british-colonies-in-africa-history-map.html#:~:text=From%201880%2D1900%20Britain%20gained,Africa's%20people%20at%20one%20time.>