

(Mis)understanding neocolonialism

Why we fail to address ongoing exploitation in international economic relations

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Abstract

In this thesis, I investigate how neocolonialism is understood in conventional views on poverty, international trade, resource extraction, and development. I will argue that an element of economic exploitation has persisted in the relation between former colonizers and colonies after the latter's independence. In many recent discussions of the relation between these countries, this existence of exploitation is either denied or justified on the grounds of general progress that past colonialism or current neocolonialism has established. I propose that there exist ultimately only three basic arguments that can be made to defend this position, which I call the consent argument, the good intentions argument and the progress argument. Furthermore, I will show that the first two of these arguments are insufficient to justify (neo)colonialism, and that therefore they rely inherently on the progress argument. I will then show that the progress argument is unable to refute the critique of neocolonial exploitation.

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Introduction

Neocolonialism is the continuation of an exploitative relation between former colonies and colonizers after the professed independence¹. The term is often used to refer to an economic relation of unequal exchange where cheap labor and resources from poor countries are exploited by Western corporations who gain most of the profit margin from the value chain. Poor countries and their citizens came to be, and deliberately are kept in this disadvantageous and dependent position by the history of colonial domination, a consequent unequal distribution of opportunities, and enduring political, economic, and military pressures and interventions from Western nations and international organizations.

The extent to which this understanding of neocolonialism is considered in common views of international trade and development differs greatly among scholars, policymakers, businesses, and public. This difference is manifest in the two similarly named works; Jeffery Sachs' book *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time* (2005) and Philippe Diaz' documentary film *The End of Poverty?* (2008). The main thesis of Sachs' book is that poverty in poor countries is the result of their inability to create economic development, but that it can be rapidly eliminated through development aid organized by rich industrialized countries. With *The End of Poverty?*, Diaz challenges this narrative (O'Hehir, 2009: para. 5), explaining that current poverty is largely the result of past colonialism and of the perpetuation of colonial dynamics between poor and rich countries. In Diaz' view, it is the intervention of rich states that sustains rather than solves poverty.

This thesis is not about the distinction between Diaz's and Sachs' works specifically, but about the widespread divide in our views of the West's intervention with poor nations that it represents. Ebru Oğurlu characterizes this divide perfectly with regards to the relationship between the EU and Africa. The "optimists", he says, emphasize "jointly favourable cooperation, improved equality and interdependence" (Oğurlu, 2018: 9). In this view, African states are benefitted by their integration into the global economy to which the EU contributes. A single world economy is supposedly beneficial for both the poor and rich nations. On the other hand, "pessimists" argue that global integration has brought mostly disadvantages to poor countries, and that Western influence in the periphery is consistently permeated by exploitation. According to this view, neocolonial relations are assumed to originate from the colonial past, which left the former colonies in poverty and underdevelopment (Oğurlu, 2018:

¹ The discussion of colonialism and independence are mostly limited in this thesis to the European empires and the United States.

9-10). I will argue for the pessimist view, proposing that many of the West's involvements in poorer nations are neocolonial, exploitative, and wrong². I believe that neocolonialism is often misunderstood in common views of 'developing countries' due to the prevalence of the optimistic view that describes underdevelopment as a lack of Western modernization and industrialization.

In recent years, the optimistic view has seen a new wave of scholars who defend the West's historical colonialism, its current economic and political involvement in former colonies, and the globalization of Western culture and governance. Of these scholars, I address in this thesis the works of Bruce Gilley, Peter Thomas Bauer, Thomas Sowell, Godfrey Uzoigwe, and Steven Pinker. I will argue that the defenses of colonialism and neocolonialism essentially boil down to three types of arguments. I will call these *the consent argument*, *the good intentions argument*, and *the progress argument*. The consent- and good intentions arguments are deontological, as they focus on the morality of the act of colonization, contending that colonized people generally agreed to being colonized, and that colonizers generally held benevolent intentions. The third is a consequentialist argument, as it supposes that the benefits of colonialism outweigh its harms, and that neocolonialism therefore is justified. I aim to show that the consent argument and the good intentions argument will always be insufficient by themselves as justifications of colonialism, and that they inherently rely on being complemented by the consequentialist argument. Furthermore, I will argue that the progress argument is historically inaccurate and inadequate to defend neocolonialism, and that the justification of neocolonialism is therefore *a priori* false. It is common among status quo apologists and defenders of the current core-periphery relation to reject those who condemn the core-periphery relation as exploitative, or to reject those who use the term neocolonialism to describe it. This rejection is ultimately grounded in either of the three basic

² In this thesis I will hereafter refer to countries that represent the role colonizers played historically as 'core countries', and to countries that occupy a position analogous to that of colonies as the 'periphery'. This terminology is borrowed from Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems theory, which divides the world into a global core, periphery, and semi-periphery. For the sake of simplicity, I have omitted discussing the semi-periphery to focus on the core-periphery relation. This relation can however also exist between the core and the semi-periphery, or between the semi-periphery and the periphery. My focus is thereby not on a classification of various countries but on an ethical analysis of the core-periphery relation. The use of this terminology does not imply that inhabitants of core countries are exclusively rich, and all benefit from and participate in the exploitation of periphery countries. Nor does it mean that all inhabitants of periphery countries are the victims of exploitation. As Galtung points out, 'The world consists of Center and Periphery nations; and each nation, in turn, has its centers and periphery' (Galtung, 1971: 81). The terms are used to describe the general features of different groups of countries and the dynamics between these countries. When citing and referring to authors who use the terms 'developed countries' and 'developing countries', or the 'Global South' versus the 'Global North' to refer to these nations, I occasionally borrow their terminology to avoid misrepresenting their positions.

arguments for the defense of neocolonialism. The purpose of this thesis is to establish that these arguments are always insufficient to reject the condemnation of neocolonial practices, by showing that an element of unjust exploitation has been ingrained in the core-periphery relation since times of colonization until today. The aim of this thesis is not to provide a moral evaluation of historical colonialism, nonetheless, I will build on the moral critiques of colonialism by Lea Ypi³, Amardo Rodriguez, and Pepijn Brandon and Aditya Sarkar to constitute a case against the optimistic view that defends modern neocolonialism.

Each of the three basic types of argument for the defense of neocolonialism has an empirical and a moral dimension. For each argument, I will discuss these two dimensions, showing that both the historical assumptions and the moral justifications of neocolonialism made in these three types of defenses are flawed. From the refutation of the moral dimension from the two deontological arguments, it becomes apparent that both these arguments are insufficient to justify neocolonialism when they are not supplemented by the consequentialist argument. The empirical dimension of this consequentialist argument can be subdivided in two statements. First is the assumption that the underdevelopment that exists today is not the result of colonialism. Second is the idea that Western countries have mostly brought progress and economic growth to the global periphery during and since the era of colonialism. The consequentialist argument comprises furthermore of the moral conviction that the benefits of neocolonialism outweighing its harms justifies the exploitation it has been coupled with, and that therefore the status quo core-periphery relation should be sustained. The progress argument thereby consists of 3 facets, which I will discuss one by one.

In section 1 I will elaborate on the concept of neocolonialism and thereby characterize the pessimistic view of the core-periphery relation. In sections 2 and 3 I will counter the consent argument and the good intentions argument, showing that both are insufficient to justify neocolonialism in absence of the progress argument. Furthermore, in section 4, I discuss the first facet of the progress argument by demonstrating that today's poverty is partly the result of colonialism. Section 5 presents an argument against the second facet of the progress argument, refuting the claim that the West's influence on former colonies has mostly been positive and that exploitation between these regions is not (or no longer) existent. My refutation is based on an overview of 4 ways in which neocolonialism continues to be

³ Although a main purpose of Ypi's paper is to disentangle the wrong of colonialism as a political relation between two groups from the defense of territorial self-determination, I will not discuss Ypi's evaluation of territorial self-determination and her distinction between these two issues for the sake of simplicity.

exploitative. In the final section, I will discuss the last two facets of the progress argument, proposing that the benefits of neocolonialism are insufficient to morally excuse its wrongs, and to justify the continuation of neocolonial practices. I will conclude in this section with a brief suggestion regarding the possibility of dismantling neocolonialism without hampering development.

1. What is neocolonialism?

“Neocolonialism” refers to the remnant features of the colonial era that still influence the countries that are both former colonies and former colonizers, despite the former colonies’ independence (Afisi, 2022: para. 1). Mostly, neocolonialism is a social, cultural, political, or economic structure or relation in or between countries that still resembles the past colonialism. The first official definition of neocolonialism was formulated at the third All African People’s Conference called the *Resolution on Neocolonialism*, describing it as “the survival of the colonial system in spite of formal recognition of political independence in emerging countries which become the victims of an indirect and subtle form of domination by political, economic, social, military or technical means” (All-African Peoples’ Conference, 1961: 1-2). Among the manifestations of neocolonialism that the conference denounced are puppet governments, deliberate political fragmentation of states, and “[t]he economic entrenchment of the colonial power before independence and the continuity of economic dependence after formal recognition of national sovereignty” (Cope, 2012: 118). One example is the case of Cameroon, where after the political independence from France, Cameroon remained dependent on certain negotiations on matters of defense, foreign policy, technical assistance, and finance. Because of French monetary policies during colonization, Cameroon remained tied in a fixed parity of 50:1 to the French franc, “automatically granting the French government control over all financial and budgetary activities” (Afisi, 2022: 2. History of Neocolonialism). Although political independence was granted to colonies, Western nations found ways to retain their economic influence and power over the former colonies (Afisi, 2022: 2. History of Neocolonialism). The means by which this dominance was maintained will be further elaborated in section 5. Neocolonialism, in short, entails a continuation of the relation between former colonies and colonizers, where influence by the former colonizer on many sectors of the former colony is continued implicitly (Afisi, 2022: 1. Introduction). Use of the term relies on the assumption that the history of extraction by a colonizer of its colony creates a relation where, after decolonization, the former colony

remains economically dependent on former colonizers. Despite the professed independence, former colonizers continue to control and monitor the political and economic situation of these countries (Afisi, 2022: 1. Introduction). Dependency and exploitation of former colonies are carried out for the economic, political, and cultural benefits of the former colonizer states (Afisi, 2022: 1. Introduction). Immanuel Wallerstein, a prominent scholar that addresses neocolonialism and who is thereby characteristic of the ‘pessimistic’ view of the core-periphery relation, writes that “the relative power continuum of stronger and weaker states has remained relatively unchanged over 400-odd years”. Wallerstein does not take this to mean that the exact same countries that were former colonizers and colonies now occupy an equivalent role, but that the dynamics of dominance and exploitation have remained⁴. The rules that govern the flows of capital, commodities, and labor are made by the richest states. Despite decolonization, the allocation of surplus-value and the price structures of markets are according to Wallerstein maintained by an interstate system to bolster the “relative competitiveness of particular producers, and therefore their profit-levels” (Wallerstein, 1991: 30-31). This consideration of neocolonialism as an exploitative international structure is neglected by proponents of the optimistic view of international relations who view the core-periphery relation as one of mutually beneficial cooperation between rich and poor countries.

2. Consent of the colonized

The first type of defense of a (neo)colonial relation is a justification of colonization from the consent of the colonized population. This argument is found with Bruce Gilley’s controversial paper ‘The Case for Colonialism’. Gilley claims that colonialism was subjectively legitimate since there were more people in countries that were colonized who collaborated and appreciated the colonization than people who resisted colonization. He states that most people in formerly colonized countries welcomed and would today still welcome colonization (Gilley, 2017: 4). It is therefore, according to Gilley, that “Western and non-Western countries should reclaim the colonial toolkit and language as part of their commitment to effective governance and international order” (Gilley, 2017: 1). Reclaiming colonial governance would entail “increasing foreign involvement in key sectors in business, civil society and the public sector” (Gilley, 2017: 7). There are two problems with the

⁴ In the past decades, China has emerged rapidly as a new world power, establishing economic and political relations with foreign countries similar to the neocolonial structures that Western former colonizers have built (Perkins, 2016: 294-295). In this thesis I do not elaborate on China’s economic imperialism specifically. Nonetheless, its practices can be encompassed in the concept of neocolonialism that I discuss.

argument of consent to colonization. This is firstly the challenge of demonstrating the agreement of most indigenous people to colonization, and secondly the requirement to argue how the consent of colonized people would justify the atrocities that have been synonymous with their consequent domination.

When Gilley defends colonialism and neocolonialism, the supposed welcoming of colonization by inhabitants of former colonies remains an unsubstantiated assertion in his reasoning. The picture that Gilley draws of indigenous people largely welcoming colonization is in the first place naïve and historically inaccurate. It is possible of course that some did agree to being colonized and that some would still welcome recolonization, there is no reason or evidence that Gilley provides however, to believe that this comprises the majority of indigenous populations. Historical evidence of the resistance to colonization by indigenous populations (Forbes, 1990: 210) would in fact suggest the opposite. Gilley's argument is furthermore flawed in that he only regards opinions of agreement to colonialism as valid representations of people's attitude towards colonialism. Gilley dismisses the voices against colonialism as anti-colonial ideology, which he does not regard as an indicator of agreement or disagreement of local people to colonization (Gilley, 2017: 2, 4-6). It is not clear from Gilley's article what he regards as criteria for agreement by a population. If he takes the agreement of colonized people to be the agreement of a certain minimum proportion of all colonized people, he ought to have specified this condition. This specification remains to be provided, as well as substantial evidence that European colonialism met this condition. Instead, Gilley seems to merely cherry-pick examples of agreement by individuals as an indication of local populations welcoming colonization and provides no argumentation for showing that the consent of some justifies the domination of all. The justification that colonizers upheld for colonialism was furthermore not grounded in the agreement of indigenous people. According to Okoth-Ogendo, colonialists used their own national legal systems to justify the expropriation of land belonging to indigenous communities. An example of this is Britain's 1890 Foreign Jurisdiction Act, which stated that any land with no settled form of government naturally belongs to the British empire. This law was followed by the British government declaring their African colonies to have no settled forms of government and extending their rule and appropriation of entitlement to these lands. Similar legal mechanisms in other European countries led to the allocation of African lands and commons to colonial settlers. Settlers were often given freeholder interest, 999-year leases, and other forms of leasehold (Okoth-Ogendo, 2003: 114). The colonization of countries was

not a response of the Europeans to a clear expression of agreement to colonization by indigenous people, it was carried out vigorously on terms that were created by the colonizers themselves.

The second problem with the argument of consent is that it does not show how consent would justify the domination of a population by another. Even when assuming for the sake of argument that all inhabitants of colonized countries consented to being colonized, a justification from consent remains a problematic argument. According to Lea Ypi, consent, in the cases where it was given by colonized people, is an “imperfect proxy for tracking an agent’s will” (Ypi, 2013: 180). This is in the first place because offers can be deceptive and manipulative, secretly benefitting the colonizer at the expense of the colonized. An example of this is the treaty of Waitangi, which led to the annexation of New Zealand to the British Crown Colony of New South Wales. The English and Maori texts differ greatly in their description of the treaty. The Maori text describes a resignation of government over the land with a preservation and protection of the Maori’s “unqualified exercise of their chieftainship”. While the English text describes a complete surrender of “all the rights and powers of Sovereignty” to the Queen. This suggests that the negotiations of this treaty were likely deceptive (Ypi, 2013: 180-181). Secondly, exchanges and offers of political association can be illegitimate when they take place under conditions of dependency. For example, the requirement for certain exchanges with European settlers was often the result of the introduction of a new good by Europeans such as the weapons that set up arms races between conflicting tribes in Africa (Ypi, 2013: 181). Thirdly, the offers of political association, culminating in signed treaties and contracts, were not truly voluntary if they were presented with the implicit potential to be coercively imposed if the offers were to be declined (Ypi, 2013: 179-181). When agreement to colonization is given by people under any of these conditions, it should not be taken as a sufficient justification of colonialism. Gilley fails thereby to show convincingly that colonialism and neocolonialism are legitimated by the agreement of colonized and formerly colonized populations. The consent argument therefore needs to be supplemented with the claim that colonialism has primarily brought advantages for colonized people. If agreement to a deceptive, illegitimate, or actually involuntary offer leads to the harm of the colonized people that agreed to it, then the proponents of the consent argument befall a tough and so far, unsettled burden of condoning the validity of the agreement. It is therefore that the consent argument cannot defend colonialism if it is not supplemented by the progress argument, which I discuss in sections 4-6.

3. The colonizers' intentions

The second type of defense is about the intentions of the colonizers. It is built on the supposition that colonizers colonized countries to bring development and improvements to the colonized populations. Gilley puts forward this argument, stating that the reasons European's had for their colonization of foreign countries were not economic but altruistic. He proposes that European countries did not profit from their colonies, but instead that they mostly lost money by investing in these countries (Gilley, 2017: 9-10). In the first place, this proposition ignores the European's genocides of, among others, indigenous peoples in the Americas (Rensink, 2011: 17-20), Tasmania (Moses and Stone, 2007: 71-78), and Congo (Hinton, 2002: 47) upon colonization⁵. As Brandon and Sarker point out, "Gilley ... blithely disregards the copious evidence of vast famines, population displacements, violent partitions, and genocidal campaigns that accompanied imperial projects from their inception till their reversal"⁶ (Brandon and Sarker, 2019: 83). Furthermore, the liberal ideas of freedom, autonomy and justice that are often attributed to Western culture and European empires "were themselves moulded by the pressure of colonial expansion, and ... continually marked by strenuous attempts to rationalize the denial of these freedoms to colonized peoples" (Brandon and Sarker, 2019: 86-87). The oppression and denial of rights of the inhabitants of colonies served to accommodate and justify the exploitation of colonies. It was this exploitation of resources and labor from colonies that enabled economic growth and industrialization in the colonizer countries. That the "extraction of natural resources and the cheap supply of precious commodities through the labour of the colonized" was a driving force of the colonial project was according to Brandon and Sarkar evident by the contentious efforts of colonizers. They state that: "few aspects of colonial governments were so systematically characterized by open violence as the organization and control of labour" (Brandon and Sarker, 2019: 78). Similarly, according to Edgardo Lander, resources extracted from colonies enabled the accumulation of wealth in European countries. "This wealth in turn enabled these countries to do much more colonial imperialism" (The End of Poverty?, 2008). Generally, it has not been the colonized who benefitted from colonization but the elites from both groups of countries. The primary aim of the colonial powers was "the forced extraction of goods and the organization of the labour necessary to obtain them" (Brandon and Sarker,

⁵ This is a selective collection of examples and not an attempt to characterize all cases of colonialism. It should be noted that cases of more peaceful colonization exist.

⁶ These atrocities were not specific to colonialism, they occurred also prior to the rise of the European empires. Nonetheless, their prevalence in Europe's colonial project demonstrates that the motives of European colonizers were not all benevolent.

2019: 106). It is difficult, if not impossible to determine the intentions of most of the colonizers. Possibly some colonizers had benevolent intentions, but the previous analysis should demonstrate that this was very often not the case. Like the consent argument, the good intentions argument requires an unattainable estimation of the general motives of a large group of people.

But even if we, again for the sake of argument, assume that most European colonists had benevolent intentions, it remains questionable whether this justifies the atrocities of colonialism. If the genocides and oppression that have been coupled with colonialism were errors in a philanthropic mission, we are still rightful in condemning the actions of the people who enforce it. This becomes apparent from the implications that can be taken from the notion that good intentions always justify bad actions. It would as such be ridiculous to suggest that the horrors committed by Mao Zedong's government can be excused because Mao Zedong believed that the ends for which he was acting were good. The good intentions argument is, like the consent argument, irrelevant if the subsequent consequences of colonialism are adverse.

4. Why past colonialism contributes to poverty today

The arguments from consent and from good intentions both inherently rely on the consequentialist argument. Both start from controversial assumptions about the motives of the majority of the colonized and of the colonizers, relying on an unfounded generalization of anecdotal evidence, and subsequently fail to show convincingly that (neo)colonialism is morally acceptable. Agreement of the colonized and the intentions of colonizers are both insufficient if colonialism and neocolonialism have established poverty, conflict, and underdevelopment. It is therefore that defenders of (neo)colonialism always must complement their deontological arguments with the assertion that Western nations have brought mostly progress and improvements to colonized nations.

Gilley states as such that, not just Western modernization, and industrialization, but colonialism entirely was advantageous for colonized countries, as the benefits supposedly outweighed the harms (Gilley, 2017: 4). This introduces the challenge of showing whether the underdevelopment that exists today is the result of the colonial past and intervention by Western countries, or of decolonization and the lack of Western influence. According to Gilley, the existence of conflict and poverty in former colonies is the result of their

decolonization and of “anti-colonial ideology”. He rejects “Confused Marxist scholars” who blame the legacies of colonialism for conflicts in former colonies, but he takes no effort to elaborate on their positions and to properly refute these (Gilley, 2017: 5-6, 12). According to Brandon and Sarkar, Gilley’s unsubstantiated rejection of colonial critique on the grounds of dogma and ideology is exemplary of a common attitude on the Right, where “academic progressivism is seen as a sinister conspiracy against free speech, based on a dogmatic belief in the uniquely evil character of colonialism” (Brandon and Sarkar, 2019: 77). Gilley and like-minded scholars are viewed here as heroes for their courage in telling the “truth” about the colonial past in the face of a dictatorial establishment of intolerant left-leaning, politically correct intellectuals (Brandon and Sarker, 2019: 76-77). To critics of colonialism, Gilley falsely attributes the belief that all atrocities in former colonies that happened after decolonization are only the result of past colonization, while very few truly claim this (Brandon and Sarker: 81). This strawman argument functions in Gilley’s essay to facilitate his suggestion that colonialism has no causal responsibility for poverty, conflict and other problems that exist in former colonies.

Similar arguments are made by the scholars Peter Thomas Bauer and Thomas Sowell. Sowell claims that the poverty some nations experience is not the result of past colonial exploitation. He supposes it to be very unlikely for a nation to rise from poverty to prosperity by emancipating itself from colonial rule or by confiscating the property of foreign investors. Like Gilley, Sowell ridicules the “attempts to blame the poverty of some nations on exploitation by other nations”, but takes no effort to elaborate on and refute these positions he opposes (Sowell, 2015: 200). Peter Thomas Bauer dismisses in similar fashion the notion that the West bears responsibility for poverty of the Third World. He insists that the West, during its colonial past, did not extract wealth and resources from its colonies (Bauer, 2000: 54-56). Bauer writes that: " Since the middle of the nineteenth century, commercial contacts established by the West have improved material conditions out of all recognition over much of the Third World" (Bauer, 2000: 58).

Economic imperialism and the imposition of monoculture economies

Gilley, Bauer, and Sowell fail to acknowledge that the maintenance of wealth extraction by European conquerors involved efforts to purposefully keep their colonies in a state of dependency. Gilley treats the wrongs of colonialism as incidental and temporary accidents,

while discussing its advantages as structural improvements (Brandon and Sarker: 84-85). This view ignores the structural oppression and exploitation of certain groups in colonized countries. According to Eric Toussaint and Serge Latouche, colonial masters prevented farmers and laborers of colonized countries from making their own tools, clothes, and utensils by destroying existing markets and industries, in order to transform them into commodity buyers. Political structures, social structures and know-how were destroyed deliberately in colonies to erase the local capacity for self-sufficiency. Each colonized country or region was assigned a function as the producer and exporter of a certain crop or mineral. This imposition of monoculture created locked economies, where the livelihoods of local inhabitants became dependent on the production of the determined resource. Simultaneously, as the capacity for the production and trade of other necessary goods was erased, people became dependent on the import of food, clothing and other products from core countries (The End of Poverty?. 2008). Latouche and Toussaint's claims are aligned with those of Ebru Oğurlu, who explains that, to this day, periphery countries benefit little from international trade because their economies are designed to primarily export raw materials and import manufactured goods from core countries. The colonial past has made periphery countries reliant on the export a single commodity for foreign exchange earnings and import of a variety of goods from Western developed nations, preventing them from diversifying their export commodities. African economies are now oriented more towards the European needs than the regional requirements (Oğurlu, 2018: 10). According to Oğurlu, this export/import relationship between core and periphery countries represents one of "unequal exchange and exploitation" (Oğurlu, 2018: 12). This correlation between poverty and past colonialism, and even the current perpetuation of exploitation of former colonies, can be supported with the example of India's textile industry. The thriving textile industry in India was deliberately destroyed by English colonizers to transform the country into an exporter of raw cotton and jute (Srivastava, 2018: 30; Tharoor: 10). This happened through the systematic destruction of India's textile manufacturing and exports by violently cutting off export markets, smashing weaver's looms, and even physically injuring weavers to prevent them from plying their craft (Tharoor, 2017: 4-7). Subsequently, the Indian textile industry was rebuilt in London, using Indian techniques and materials that the British copied and stole. While fueling the industrial revolution in Britain, according to Priyanka Srivastava, this process impoverished a large part of the Indian population⁷. "Simultaneously", she writes,

⁷ This case refers to the Indian economy under British rule, India's economy has seen a massive increase in

“colonized India became a captive market for finished British industrial goods. The colonial government’s support for British industries eroded domestic, artisanal industries, intensifying Indian dependency on agriculture as a source of livelihood” (Srivastava, 2018: 30). Moreover, famines in this period aligned with the imposed exports of massive amounts of wheat and rice from India to Britain, as well as with the destruction of craftsmanship and artisanal production in India (Tharoor, 2017: 10, 173-174). India’s economy has not yet fully recovered from its destruction by British colonizers (Gupta, 2019: 19; Karmakar, 2015: 277). Tharoor uses India as an example to illustrate “the economic dependence of much of the postcolonial world on the former imperial states” (Tharoor, 2017: 272). It becomes evident from this and other examples that the poverty of former colonies is for a significant part the result of past exploitation and neocolonialism.

It remains difficult of course to determine exactly the extent to which poverty and underdevelopment in the periphery are ultimately caused by colonialism. The tragedies and the improvements in the periphery are often strategically attributed to colonialism or decolonization depending on the perspective of the author⁸. Gilley takes all underdevelopment of the past century to be a result of decolonization, attempting to demonstrate the superiority of Western culture and governance. In response, Rodriguez puts forward the question of whether the First and Second World War, the Holocaust, and the pollution of our environment should then “not be factored into our assessment of the supposed superiority of the Western/European world?” (Rodriguez, 2018: 257). This question demonstrates the difficulty of condemning specific societies for arisen disasters. The belief that indigenous people rely on Western colonization or intervention to create peace and prosperity furthermore gives the impression that they are inherently incapable of doing so autonomously because of some kind of moral and intellectual deficit. Yet Gilley never tells us what this deficit is (Rodriguez, 2018: 257).

Besides blaming decolonization for existing underdevelopment, defenders of neocolonial relations often attribute improvements in colonized countries such as the increased wages and life expectancy to colonialism, in favor of refuting the critique of neocolonial exploitation.

GDP per capita since decolonization (India Poverty Rate 1977-2022, 2022). It is ambiguous whether this growth was due to the colonial past or due to decolonization.

⁸ My own inquiry is of course also susceptible to committing this fallacy. This is a fragility to be admitted, but most of all a challenge to substantiate the causal relation between colonialism and underdevelopment that I presume. As mentioned before, the aim of this discussion is not to assert that all underdevelopment is due to colonialism, but that this is the case for a substantial part.

Their argument relies on the assumption that without colonial intervention non-Western countries would have stayed “backward” (Heldring and Robinson, 2012: 1-2). It is ambiguous however, whether the advancements that have occurred in the periphery since independence were because of colonialism or despite it. Whether these developments would have been less if these countries would not have been colonized is for most countries only informed guesswork (Heldring and Robinson, 2012: 1-2; Kendhammer, 2017: para. 5). It is evident however, that even in the absence of colonialism, technology generally diffuses across countries (Heldring and Robinson, 2012: 4). The example of Thailand, which was never colonized by the European empires, shows that it is possible for non-Western countries to achieve a similar degree of development as former colonies. As Heldring and Robinson point out “There is no one causal effect [of colonialism on development], but rather different effects working through different mechanisms and channels. Sometimes the net effect of these in a country is (almost surely) positive (Australia) sometimes it is (probably) negative (Botswana and Ghana)” (Heldring and Robinson, 2012: 3). In the case of South Africa, they show, that “calculations about the immiserizing impact of land expropriation and the creation of ‘dual economies’ ... on African incomes suggests that Africans experienced a severe deterioration in living standards as the consequence of colonialism” (Heldring and Robinson, 2012: 3-4). Various similar findings confirm cases of this link between colonialism and underdevelopment. As such, Acemoglu et al. show that in former colonies where the colonizer’s focus was on extraction, weak institutions of private property were established and these poor institutions persist today, which constitutes the main cause of Africa’s poverty (Acemoglu et al., 2001: 1369-1370, 1387). Although the belief that all underdevelopment is caused only by colonialism is clearly false, this section should have demonstrated that much underdevelopment is at least partly the result of our colonial history. Proponents of the progress argument therefore befall the obligation to demonstrate how the misery caused by colonialism is justified. This demonstration generally relies on the claim that the core-periphery relation since decolonization has been advantageous to periphery countries, this claim is discussed in the following section.

5. Did Western modernization bring mostly progress?

Neocolonialism is not only misunderstood in scholar’s underestimation of the impact colonialism has had on today’s economies of the global periphery, but also, the perpetuation of exploitation in the current relationships between core and periphery countries gets

neglected when it is claimed that Western countries today bring mostly progress to poor countries by driving modernization. This is the second facet of the progress argument, which goes beyond the legacy of historical colonialism and regards the general impact of the core-periphery relation. The problem is not that this claim is entirely untrue, but that it fails to see how significant parts of global trade are characterized by unequal exchange and exploitation. An example of this neglect is found when Bauer states that imperialists did not drain the wealth of the Third World, but instead helped to create it there (Bauer, 2000: 55). He denies that the prosperity acquired by Western countries, persons and corporations is achieved at the expense of the less well-off (Bauer, 2000: 61). According to Bauer, Third World countries are now much better off because of Western influence (Bauer, 2000: 56). When he writes that “poverty has no causes, wealth has causes”, Bauer takes poverty to be a natural state that countries arise from by modernization (Pinker, 2018: 105). According to Bauer, Europe’s industrial revolution and economic growth were not fueled by colonialism but only by liberalism and the lack of political constraint (Raico, 2018: The "European Miracle"). He relies here on the assumption that poverty exists only because poor nations have failed to establish a political model that rich nations independently have achieved. He uses this judgement consequently to reject the notion that the relation of rich nations to poor nations is in any way exploitative (Bauer, 2000: 56). Bauer supports this claim by stating that the poor areas of Third World countries are the ones with the least commercial contact with the West, while the opposite is true for its most prosperous sites (Bauer, 2000: 57). He continues to demonstrate this by mentioning as examples the emergence and growth of the rubber and tin industries in Malaysia, and the cocoa and oil palm industries in West Africa that are according to him “made possible by Westerners” (Bauer, 2000: 59).

Bauer’s denial of the existence of exploitation in the West’s relations with former colonies relies on the assumption that the existence or nonexistence of exploitation can be measured solely by looking at the magnitude of industrialization, modernization, and infrastructure in periphery countries. Bauer’s view of the core-periphery relation is thereby a good example of the second facet of the progress argument. To regard ‘underdevelopment’ as a lack of liberal trade and markets that Europe independently and internally transcended is an idea that Lander and Past call an essential aspect of eurocentrism. The classification of non-European countries as undeveloped served in the past to justify colonization, today it is used according to Lander and Past to exert control over these regions (Lander and Past, 2002: 247-248). It is relevant then to examine exactly in what ways neocolonialism exists and why it can be

exploitative. Because the nonexistence of exploitation is not a necessary consequence of the existence of industry, this examination can reveal how trade can function to keep a nation and a large part of its population in debt or in poverty while there is an expansion of industry or infrastructure in that same nation. For this analysis, I have found it convenient to divide the ways in which neocolonialism exists and perpetuates exploitation into four categories⁹.

5.1 The ownership of land and resources

The first instance of neocolonialism is the distribution of ownership over land and resources that colonialism established. In many former colonies, local inhabitants still do not have ownership over the lands on which they live and that were originally stolen from their communities generations ago. Decades after the independence of their countries, lands are still owned by large landowners and transnational corporations (The End of Poverty?, 2008). Correia refers to this phenomenon when he cites Wolfe in arguing that settler colonialism is an enduring structure, rather than a past event (Correia, 2021: 39). In South Africa, ownership of agricultural land is concentrated with the minority of white large-scale farms (Moyo, 2014: 20). According to Moyo, unequal ownership of land underlies unequal access to resources and is a key source of low productivity among peasant farmers and of “racial inequality between the white and black farmers in former settler colonial ... enclaves dominated by foreign capital” (Moyo, 2014: 29)

5.2 Unequal exchange

As discussed before, after decolonization former colonies have to a large extent been with their local economies destroyed. Since often, formerly existing trade relations, such as the Indian textile exports, were erased during the era of colonialism, periphery countries have less capacity for the development of a healthy economy. Meanwhile, multinational corporations have control over much more infrastructure and technology, the possibility for the development of which partly relied on the industrialization that was enabled by colonial resource extraction. This results in large export markets for mostly raw materials in periphery countries. The livelihoods of many local inhabitants rely on working at plantations, or mines, while most of the surplus-value made in the value chain is added in the processing of these

⁹ In this classification, I have omitted the discussions of the extermination or degradation of cultures and of the reformation of natives' minds that were common to colonialism (Afisi, 2022: 1. Introduction).

exported materials carried out by Western companies. A clear example of this practice is the mining industry of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The worldwide supply of coltan, an essential mineral in the production of electronic devices such as mobile phones and computers, is sourced in the DRC for over 30%. Coltan mining in the DRC is carried out primarily by former farmers who turned to mining because of higher incomes, the wage of miners ranges between \$1 and \$5 per day (Nathan and Sarker, 2011: 2). While the value of coltan and other minerals taken from Congolese mines is great, the Congolese population has been denied access to their resources (Locke, 2010: 47). After a long history of mineral extraction in the DRC, the wealth generated has not been used to the benefit of the great majority of its people (Locke, 2010: 47). The land that the indigenous population originally owned is now structurally exploited for the benefit of the West, leaving many Congolese inhabitants facing poverty. Above all, Western influence and mining interests currently perpetuate political instability in the DRC (Locke, 2010: 2-3). Similarly, according to Fajardo, the Western markets for tropical goods create economic bubbles in producer countries (mostly in Latin America) that cause mass suffering after they burst. Farmers are led to practice Western capitalist models, such as replacing sustenance polyculture fields with export monoculture fields under the theory of competitive advantage. “In a post-colonial situation, however”, Fajardo concludes, “the cards are stacked against the small producers, who despite their economically rational actions end up subject to the whims of the global market and the weather” (Fajardo, 2019: “A Yankee Fruit”).

In section 5.1 I portrayed how an unjust distribution of property as a heritage of colonialism can perpetuate exploitation. However, when classifying unequal exchange as a type of neocolonialism, it is irrelevant that land and resources are now also sometimes owned and controlled by governments of the formerly colonized countries themselves. Because the economies of these countries have previously been destroyed and turned into monocultures during colonization, many of these countries were left in poverty after decolonization, with the entire infrastructure build around the export of a single commodity. This situation necessitates these countries to continue exporting raw materials to core countries, where most of the profit margin ends up. With most of the population left in poverty, cheap labor remains to be exploited in the production of these materials. It is in many cases only a minority that profits from the ownership of land, resources, and infrastructure by the periphery country itself. But the occurrence of the exploitation of labor is not only present in the production and export of raw minerals or crops. Exploitation of cheap labor forces is also present in

processing factories such as the sweatshops that are prevalent in Asia, which is correlated with neocolonial dependencies (Manzenreiter, 2014: 313). Neocolonialism is not merely characterized as the export of raw materials. It involves a class of people that are structurally poor and disadvantaged because economic development in their country has been stagnating because of its colonial history, and that is now exploited for cheap labor by multinational companies to the benefit of Western countries. Simultaneously, multinational companies find in periphery countries sales markets for imported, often industrially produced goods. The settling of this retail creates unfair competition for local producers, as it can offer products and services for tremendously lower prices (Dawar and Frost, 1999: para. 1-3). The subsequent disappearance of local small-scale producers and traders is part of the externalities and therefore the responsibility of industrial producers that offer products here.

5.3 Political and military pressure

The position of periphery countries as a cheap source of resources or labor has often been purposefully maintained by core countries through political pressure and even military force after decolonization. This can happen, for example, through large loans issued by international financial institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank, and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and through the subsequent debt of these loans. This role is fulfilled specifically by Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). SAPs are loans that are given to countries in economic crisis, or they are conditions for the remission of debt. When countries face trouble paying off these loans, they often turn to austerity, increasing taxes and reducing government spending. In many cases, this has harmed social programs such as healthcare and education, or led to governments eliminating food subsidies and raising prices for public services.

SAPs are accompanied by specific conditions for the receiving country. These conditions often involve:

- The privatization of state enterprises
- Liberalizing trade and foreign investment
- Cutting wages and weakening labor protection laws such as the minimum wage
- Devaluing the currency to make exports more competitive
- Reducing barriers to foreign capital and enhancing the rights of foreign investors by eliminating trade protection like import quotas (Bello, 2004: 43)

Motivations for and results of many of these conditions are the removal of what are seen as artificial barriers to the mobility of local and foreign capital, the reduction/removal of direct state intervention in the productive and redistributive sectors of the economy and focusing the economic output on resource extraction and export (Bello, 2004: 43-44). This opening up of developing countries' economies to the international market enabled multinational corporations to invest massively in markets in the periphery. According to Cardoso and Falletto, SAPs have thereby contributed to the exertion of control by Western industrialized countries (Cardoso and Falletto, 1979: 160). Econometricians in service of construction and engineering firms, international financial organizations and Western governments often justify international loans using misleading selections of statistics, revealing economic growth but excluding the uneven distribution thereof. These statistics are presented in the offer and negotiation of loans with political leaders from receiving countries. These statistics are aimed at making loans appear to be in favor of the receiving country, while most benefits are often gained by the creditor and by the rich population of the receiving country (Perkins, 2016: 42-44). The debt of these loans is used as an efficient tool to ensure access for Western countries to raw materials and infrastructure on the cheapest possible terms (George 1990 as cited in Shah, 2013: para. 1). Oğurlu states similarly, with regards to the relation between the EU and Africa, that "all development agreements with the African states have created a centre-periphery relationship as the mechanisms of the EU's neo-colonial aspirations ... Within the framework of the development cooperation, the EU can protect its interests, markets and investments in Africa under a democratic coverage and construct a dependent Africa on Europe" (Oğurlu, 2018: 2). Development policy has according to Oğurlu become a way of professionalization and institutionalization of Western intervention in former colonies, as well as an ideological tool for the construction of the periphery as a neo-colony (Oğurlu, 2018: 10).

In practice, SAPs have had little impact on boosting economic progress in developing countries (Oğurlu, 2018: 6). Between 1986 and 2016, the sixty poorest countries have paid \$550 billion in principal and interest on loans of \$540 billion, they still owe \$523 billion on these same loans. "The cost of servicing that debt is more than these countries spend on health or education and is twenty times the amount they receive annually in foreign aid" (Henry, 2004 as cited in Perkins, 2016: 273). World Bank projects have additionally been responsible for forcing 3.4 million people out of their homes in the past decade (Kushner et al., 2015 as cited in Perkins, 2016: 273). Government authorities have used World Bank

forest-conservation projects as a vehicle for pushing indigenous peoples out of their ancestral forests (Kushner et al., 2015).

When these international loans and the SAPs are defended by drawing attention to the voluntary cooperation of the receiving countries, the same problems arise that were previously considered in my examination of the consent argument. The acceptance of loans from international financial institutions is often made from a position of dependency, desperation, political pressure, or deception (Perkins, 2016: 44-45, 219).

The tendency of Western governments to implement legislation that preserves the economic exploitation of international companies in developing countries is also revealed in the draft agreement of the *Multilateral Agreement of Investment* (MAI). This agreement was negotiated in secret between members of the OECD. A leak of the draft document revealed that the MAI was aimed at establishing universal investment laws to grant corporations and investors unconditional rights to engage in financial operations in every country, without regard to national laws and citizen's rights. The MAI would give corporations the right to sue governments if national health, labor, or environmental laws interfered with their interests (Global Policy Forum, 2022: Multilateral Agreement on Investment). The goal of the MAI was to create "a system of undistorted commerce" (WTO 1999 as cited in Lander: 249). This view of *natural* as opposed to *distorted* commerce becomes apparent in the bans on performance requirements of governments that the MAI would enforce. The full freedom of the investor should, in accordance with this, "always take precedence over any other social, cultural, political, or economic interest, goal, or value of the countries, regions, and communities toward which the investment is directed. Any effort to redirect, change, regulate, promote, limit, or ban any of the investor's activities constitutes discrimination or distortion" (Lander, 2002: 250-251). The negotiations for the MAI failed after massive global protests and criticism from civil society groups, environmental movements and developing countries, following the leak of the draft document. After this failure, governments of rich countries have continued to push for similar investment provisions in regional trade agreements and the WTO (Global Policy Forum, 2022: Multilateral Agreement on Investment). As Pierre Bourdieu has stated, international laws such as the MAI establish a global legal order designed to "call into question any and all collective structures that could serve as an obstacle to the logic of the pure market" (Bourdieu, 1998 as cited in Lander, 2002: 253).

In terms of pursuing military dominance to maintain neocolonial relations, the United States have shown to be exceptionally fanatical. In the pursuit of securing global markets and trade relations, the US have occasionally engaged in unjustified military intervention in foreign countries. These efforts have taken place even until after the 20th century's wave of decolonization and dismantlement of the colonial empires. Several times over the past decades, the US orchestrated coups against political leaders and regimes following their refusal to cooperate with American economic interests. Occasionally, corrupt repressive governments have been installed by the US to maintain exploitative markets in the concerning countries. Cases of this involve the coups against: Iran's Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh in 1953 (Perkins, 2016: 47), Guatemalan President Jacobo Árbenz in 1954 (Jones, 2004: 19), the Congolese government of Patrice Lumumba in 1960 (Jones, 2004: 230), and Chile's government of President Salvador Allende in 1973 (Jones, 2004: 191). All these leaders were democratically elected, often following a democratic revolution in the country. Furthermore, the lack of justification behind the US invasion of Panama in 1989 is illustrative of the military force the US exerts in foreign countries to protect its own interests. These military interventions were pursued after governments refused to accept huge loans or to cooperate with infrastructure development or construction projects to be carried out by American corporations (Perkins, 2016: 19)

5.4 Environmental degradation

Lastly is the occurrence of resource extraction by multinational companies in periphery nations contributing to local environmental degradation, endangering the livelihoods of indigenous communities. For example, the natural environment of the Yara wetlands of Kenya supports the livelihoods and a range of environmental services for native inhabitants of the area. The Dominion Farms Ltd farms and factories that settled in the region in 2003 have allegedly drained effluent into the swamps. The subsequent pollution of the water supply has led to much illness among the local population and low yields from subsistence farming and fishing in the area (Mwendwa, 2012: para. 16-21). Dominion Farms Ltd has also been responsible for the creation of dams which unintentionally created floods that rendered crop fields in the area unusable. And finally, the aerial spraying of agro-chemicals by this company has affected the populations health and led to increased child mortality. The grains and legumes that Dominion Farms Ltd grows are moreover exported to the United States, the local population enjoys no economic benefits from the company's establishment in the Yara

wetlands (The End of Poverty?, 2009). A second example is that of European aquaculture sourced along the West African coastline. Major European companies such as Carrefour and Leclerc supermarkets are responsible for the depletion of fish from these seas, endangering the livelihoods and food supply of local populations (Miner, 2011: para. 1-3).

These and countless other examples show how Western industries settled in periphery countries can practice exploitation of the land and harm the indigenous population by degrading the environment. John Perkins' accurately describes the harm of environmental degradation when he writes about the European settlement on the America's that "once forests and animals such as the buffalo are destroyed, and once people are moved onto reservations, the very foundations of cultures collapses" (Perkins, 2016: 133). If our natural ecosystems can only accommodate a limited degree of resource extraction, but also of emission and pollution, putting disproportional pressure on the environment can be viewed as a form of injustice. It is generally the poorest nations that experience the most devastating results from climate change, and that are the least able to cope with its consequences. The current attitude of industrialized countries towards climate change and environmental degradation aligns with our history of exploitation of colonies, since the damages that result from the industry of which core countries benefit is externalized to the global periphery.

Why exploitation is not disproven by the existence of infrastructure and industry

With the classification of these four types of exploitation in neocolonial relations it becomes clear that Bauer's argument about exploitation is incorrect. The impact of neocolonialism is not positive simply because it established industry in periphery countries when that industry benefits only the periphery's rich population¹⁰. As Heldring and Robinson point out, the fact that various improvements have happened on average does not imply that everyone's

¹⁰ Success stories of colonies, such as the US, Canada, New Zealand and Australia, demonstrate that colonization can lead to unprecedented economic growth and industrialization, improving the standard of living for most of the population. As Acemoglu et al. point out, the extractive colonies, the main purpose of which was to "transfer as much of the resources of the colony to the colonizer", are contrasted with the "Neo-Europes", where settlers tried to replicate European institutions (Acemoglu et al., 2021: 1370). In these cases, however, the society of indigenous communities was dismantled and replaced by that of the colonizers. In the case of the United States for example, the Native American population that survived the colonization itself was largely moved to reservations, where quality of life has been described as very low (Sandefur, 1989: 38-39). It is therefore questionable whether colonialism can be counted as an improvement here. The number of countries where Western influence has led to an economic growth that improves the standard of living for the entire native population, such as South-Korea and Japan, is limited. Nonetheless, these cases demonstrate that a one-sided characterization of the effects of colonialism cannot be made.

standard of living improved (Heldring and Robinson, 2012: 3). Historical legacies, deliberate efforts by corporations and governments, and externalities from industry keep periphery nations and their poorest communities structurally in a state of poverty and dependence. The existence of industrial infrastructure in poor nations is often put in place to harvest and process cheap materials for the benefit of multinational corporations and Western countries. Because of dual economies in periphery countries, economic growth can benefit one group while structurally excluding another. Bauer's statement that "poverty has no causes, wealth has causes" is therefore only half true in the case of neocolonialism. The poverty of some does have causes, and those are its maintenance through neocolonial structures and the colonial past. Wealth also has causes, and sometimes one of these causes is the poverty of others.

6. Is exploitation a tolerable bump in the path towards progress?

It should become clear from the previous discussion of the progress argument's empirical dimension that it is impossible to conclusively establish whether the West's influence on the global periphery has been mostly positive or negative. This discussion should have demonstrated however, that an element of reprehensible neocolonial exploitation indubitably exists in the core-periphery relation. Despite these insights into the exploitative relation between core and periphery countries however, some insist that neocolonialism is tolerable, as it eventually leads to economic growth and general progress. This introduces the moral dimension of the consequentialist argument for the defense of neocolonialism, which comprises of the conviction that neocolonial practices and structures are justified or desirable because of their benefits. This belief rests not on the assumption that neocolonialism is not exploitative, but that its exploitation can be excused due to its profits. This attitude is held by Godfrey Uzoigwe when he writes that "economically, although neocolonialism ... is by its nature exploitative, if it is properly managed it has the potential to lead to economic growth and development" (Uzoigwe, 2019: 82). Unlike Bauer, Uzoigwe, condemns neocolonialism for preserving colonial attitudes that are inherently racist, and for its role in sustaining political unrest, corruption, and perpetual economic dependency in the Global South (Uzoigwe, 2019: 72, 81-82). But simultaneously, he praises neocolonialism for the economic progress, infrastructure development, employment, and raised standard of living that it brought (Uzoigwe, 2019: 82). A similar rationalization of colonial and neocolonial exploitation is found implicitly in Steven Pinker's optimistic celebration of progress based on

the ideals of the European Enlightenment (Kolinjivadi, 2018: ‘Enlightenment Now’ rationalizes the violence of empire). As examples of this progress, Pinker mentions the recent decreases in poverty, child and maternal mortality, childhood stunting and undernourishment, and the rapid improvements such as GDP growth and increased safety in ‘developing countries’ (Pinker, 2018: 76, 78, 93, 95-96, 113, 117, 214). He produces an impressive overview of data that shows recent history’s unprecedented movement out of poverty. This leads him to the belief that the dangers of inequality are mostly overstated (Anthony, 2018: para. 39).

I have previously attacked Bauer for his Eurocentric perspective on development, as he takes the expansion of industry as an unconditional indication of progress. I do not aim to make this same case against the conception of development just established on the grounds of Uzoigwe’s and Pinker’s descriptions, as I do not believe that the values it encompasses are necessarily Eurocentric. I will therefore assume development as just characterized to be desirable. Nonetheless, I do aim to challenge two suggestions that could be inferred from Uzoigwe’s and Pinker’s judgements. First is the suggestion that a core-country’s contribution to development can morally legitimate its neocolonial practices. As such, although I agree with Uzoigwe’s and Pinker’s condemnations and praises of the West’s relation to poor nations, I think they wrongly create the suggestion that the nefariousness of neocolonialism can be excused due to its benefits. Second is the suggestion that neocolonialism should be continued since it brings more benefits than it does harm. I will discuss these two points respectively.

6.1 Can neocolonialism be legitimate?

According to Dipesh Chakrabarty we must “write into the history of modernity the ambivalences, contradictions, the use of force, and the tragedies and ironies that attend it” (Fajardo, 2019: para. 3). We can see modernity and Western influence as something that can bring progress. But we must keep acknowledging the past-, but also current atrocities that have been systematically coupled with Western interventions. Kolinjivadi argues that Pinker violates this requirement when he rationalizes historical colonial violence, structural efforts to dominate others through control or force, and ecological destruction as “invariable consequences of advancements towards greater emancipation as human beings” (Kolinjivadi, 2018: Rationalizing colonial violence in the name of “progress”). Creating a realistic and

appropriate perspective of the European empires involves acknowledging that colonialism and neocolonialism are objectionable types of relation per se. The defense of colonialism fails because it has to underestimate the violence and brutality of imperialists, racism against native people, and theft and exploitation of land and resources. But according to Ypi, besides the familiar outrages about the historical horrors, colonialism is wrong because it creates and upholds “a political association that denies its members equal and reciprocal terms of cooperation” (Ypi, 2013: 158, 162). When European colonists arrived in foreign countries, their attempts to settle there and to establish political and economic relations were often met with the imposition of restrictions by the local populations. Europeans were often denied passage, settlement, and trade. These restrictions according to Ypi were justified, and often even necessary, because of the “violations of standards of equality and reciprocity in setting up common political relations” (Ypi, 2013: 174). This included violence, but also “peaceful but deceptive offers of exchange” made by colonizers to expropriate lands owned by local populations. The colonialism practiced by European states was particularly abhorrent since there was no equal and reciprocal basis of interaction between colonizers and colonized people. This according to Ypi created an objectionable model of political association that makes colonialism illegitimate (Ypi, 2013: 174-175). “Conquest and annexation”, she writes, “are wrong because they are unilateral forms of political association, failing to establish equal and reciprocal terms of political interaction.” (Ypi, 2013: 185). According to Ypi, if colonialism were to be legitimate, equality and reciprocity should be reflected in the structure of the association between colonizer and colonized, and in the design of institutions that facilitate their cooperation (Ypi, 2013: 178). Her subsequent claim that European colonialism violates this principle and is therefore wrong (Ypi, 2013: 178), becomes evident from the previous examination of the impact of colonialism on local economies of colonized countries in sections 4 and 5.

The inherent wrong of colonialism, regardless of its benefits, is shown when Ypi introduces the example of a forced marriage that turns out to be abusive. In this example, the victim’s parents free their daughter from this abusive marriage by arranging another forced marriage with a more respectful husband. Ypi shows with this example that we do not deem the second forced marriage to be morally acceptable simply because it improves her situation, this improvement does not legitimize a relation of forced marriage. Similarly, the colonialism of humanitarian interveners is not morally legitimate because of the improvements it establishes, just like forced marriage, colonialism is an objectionable relation per se (Ypi, 2013i: 185). It

should be noted that the point of Ypi's argument is not to invoke a ranking of different forms of oppression. It is to show that colonialism is always a wrong in itself. According to Ypi, "the question of what is wrong with colonialism can be distinguished from questions regarding the acceptability of the costs of, say, ending domestic oppression ... Conversely, even if it is ... conceded (for the sake of argument) that some or all of these practices are necessary in order to advance some substantive principles, the resulting relation is no less colonial with regard to how associative norms are created, and therefore no less wrong" (Ypi, 2013: 186). With regards to neocolonialism, even though former colonies are officially independent, their continued economic dependence and political subordination to core countries upholds a similar objectionable relation to that of colonialism. When it becomes evident that economic and political subordination and dependence of former colonies on former colonizers already structurally keep large groups in former colonies disadvantaged, judgements like Gilley's call for recolonization become obviously ridiculous.

6.2 Do the benefits of neocolonialism outweigh its harms?

But even when it is established that (neo)colonialism cannot be morally excused or deemed legitimate by the benefits that it brings, the question can still be asked whether these benefits make neocolonialism worthwhile in practice. In other words, acknowledging that neocolonialism is unconditionally abject does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that its current practices ought to be eliminated. Here, Ypi's argument falls short of precluding the possibility of a case that maintains a defense of practicing neocolonialism due to its benefits outweighing its harms. Ypi seems to suggest that a neocolonial relation is wrong, even if it leads to more benefits than harms. This means that so far, we have established a deontological response to a consequentialist argument. To a consequentialist, this might seem unconvincing. This consequentialist argument is the second implication that can be inferred from Uzoigwe's and Pinker's perspectives.

As noted previously, it might be beneficial and perhaps necessary to acknowledge the progress Western modernization and economic involvement have brought to periphery countries. But nevertheless, improvements have so far always excluded large classes of laborers, often farmers, that are kept in a state of economic dependence. According to Risse, the current global political and economic order is designed to disadvantage the poor (Risse, 2005: 375). Miriam Campos describes many of these people as "practically slaves", who

often do not receive pay for their work because of debts inherited from generation to generation (The End of Poverty?, 2009). Often these involve indigenous communities whose lands have been expropriated by colonial settlers and are yet to be restituted. Improvements in periphery countries have so far mostly benefitted an already rich minority. Müller rightly points out that Pinker fails to address how social upward mobility is stagnating (Müller, 2018: Is the world getting better or worse?). The perspectives Uzoigwe and Pinker put forward are very valid in defending the technologies, innovations, social organization, and infrastructure developments that have been synonymous with Western modernization, but not adequate to justify many aspects of the core-periphery relation. There are many involvements of Western countries and corporations in periphery nations that are exploitative, and do not benefit local communities. The consequentialist case for neocolonialism highlights a net balance of benefits but fails to recognize the unequal distribution of these benefits. The objectionable relation that Ypi calls the domination by a colonizer country of its colony (Ypi, 2013: 162), exists today between core and periphery countries (Ypi, 2013: 188-189), but also within a periphery country between the rich and the poor. As with the case of Bauer's denial of exploitation in core-periphery relations, the view that neocolonialism is tolerable due to its benefits is vulnerable to the error of generalizing improvements in periphery countries.

Pinker might object to this judgement, stating that it commits the *lump fallacy*. The *lump fallacy* is the false assumption that wealth is a finite resource that was divided in a zero-sum fashion (Pinker, 2018: 129). He states that this fallacy is committed when wealth is regarded as something that ought to be distributed (Pinker, 2018: 106) while truly, wealth increases with economic activity, energy use and industrialization (Anthony, 2018: para. 38). According to Pinker, we should replace the view of wealth as a pie that needs to be divided with one where economic development contributes to baking an ever-larger pie (Pinker, 2018: 107). Pinker highly emphasizes the difference between inequality and poverty (Anthony, 2018: para. 40). Although he acknowledges that inequality is rising, he maintains that inequality is "not itself a dimension of human wellbeing" (Pinker, 2018: 133). The implication Pinker makes is that poverty is declining, and therefore economic inequality should not be addressed as a fundamental problem. When everybody can afford to properly feed and sustain themselves, it no longer matters that some are richer than others.

The problem with Pinker's presentation of the *lump fallacy* and of his separation between poverty and inequality is that they treat poverty as an issue that will be eradicated naturally in the coming time if further economic growth is allowed. As the pie grows, everyone would

according to Pinker get a large enough share eventually. Although inequality and poverty are theoretically separate issues, in practice, the deliberate maintenance of inequality by the wealthy keeps others structurally poor. The fact that wealth is not a finite resource does not undermine the observation that certain systems of production and product processing in the periphery are designed to benefit a few companies and to deny laborers, farmers, and local populations most of the wealth that gets created. Although the pie gets larger, its exuberance is still largely reserved for those that are already served plenty. As an example, according to Oxfam International, 82% of wealth created in 2017 went to the richest 1% of the population (Pimentel, Aymar and Lawson, 2018: para. 1). On average, income of the poor increases with economic growth, in countries where inequality initially is high however, the poorest groups tend to benefit little from economic growth (Danielson, 2001: 6). Poverty and inequality are aligned because they are ingrained in exploitative structures. Even if it would be the case that inequality is not a dimension of wellbeing, a contention that various researchers in Quality-of-Life Studies have already decisively refuted (Cooper, McCausland and Theodossiou, 2014: 947; Okulicz-Kozaryn, 2015: 405), we can still question whether its continuance through neocolonialism is just. It may be the case that all income groups profit at least a little from economic growth established by globalization of Western markets. Yet, if this global order structurally reserves most wealth for the rich core countries, it constitutes an inequitable relation nonetheless.

As has become clear previously, there are four ways in which neocolonialism exists. For each of these kinds, it is primarily poor groups of laborers that become structurally disadvantaged. This shows that the disadvantages of the core-periphery relation are concentrated with the subjects of neocolonialism, and that the advantages of this relation can therefore not justify its neocolonial character. As long as practices such as Dominion Farms Ltd's pollution of the Kenyan environment, Congolese mineral exports that benefit international traders rather than the Congolese miners, and South Africa's unequal distribution of land persist, neocolonialism remains to be exploitative. There remains a necessity to address these practices, despite the advances Western influence brought to poor nations. The four facets of this neocolonial character of the core-periphery relation: the historically unjust distributions of land and resources, environmental degradation, unequal exchange, and political and military pressure; are furthermore no necessary conditions for development in periphery nations. Critique of these 4 types of neocolonialism does not threaten progress and mentioning progress in the periphery is no adequate refutation of this critique. The progress argument suggests that the

progress from Western globalization overshadows the wrongs of neocolonialism. It may turn out however, that identifying, addressing, and eventually improving ongoing injustices is precisely what progress entails.

6.3 Development without exploitation

This suggests that other pathways towards progress should be explored before defending the core-periphery relation as it exists currently. Although it is not within the scope of this thesis to suggest and discuss elaborately the concrete possible actions for dismantling neocolonialism, I do aim to argue that the direction of future steps should be one of diminishing the heritage of colonialism and reducing certain forms of Western involvement with periphery countries. Implementing land restitutions, reducing pollution and biodiversity harm caused by Western industry, abolishing conditions to SAPs that are shown to not improve the economic situation in receiving countries, and abrogating unjustified military interventions by Western countries, should all be viewed as possible steps towards genuine progress and development, rather than obstructions of it. An opposition to the strong involvement of Western countries in poor nations is not by extent an opposition to progress. It should be clear then that a priority of development efforts should be to enable south-south cooperation (Ramalho, Walraf and Müller, 2019: Strategic advantage), rather than a subjugation of poor countries to Western guidance. Another possibility to be explored is what Fajardo calls ‘humanizing the production’ of goods of which the production and trade are characterized by exploitation. This encompasses reducing the bridge between producers and consumers, as well as changing the narrative about tropical commodities and informing consumers about the full cost of cheap products (Fajardo, 2019: “A Yankee Fruit”). Ideally, a consumer response would include large boycotts of products from which the origins have shown to be exploitative, in turn making the exploitation of resources and labor less financially viable. An example of this occurrence as it has already happened is the 2019 consumer boycott of products from the brands H&M and Nike due to these brands allegedly using forced labor in the production of their clothing and shoes (Westcott and He, 2021: para. 1-2). Similar efforts could include boycotts of products that contribute to environmental degradation which harms indigenous populations. To accurately address and tackle neocolonialism, the focus of Western activism should be a collaborative effort to boycott

trade relations with the global periphery that rely on the exploitation of natural resources and labor of native inhabitants.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have dissected the defense of the status quo core-periphery relation that is often put forward in recent debates to debunk the existence of neocolonial exploitation or to justify neocolonialism. Of the three basic arguments that can be made to defend this relation, I have shown that the consent argument and the good intentions argument rest on unfounded assumptions and are unfit to morally justify colonialism and neocolonialism. In the first place, both arguments lack properly defined criteria to determine the agreement of indigenous populations to colonization and the motives of colonizers. Furthermore, they lack evidence to show that these hypothetical criteria would be met, while in fact, evidence of the violence of colonialism and the resistance to it would suggest the opposite. Thirdly, these two arguments can not justify (neo)colonialism if it has established significant damages to colonized people. The consent argument and the good intentions argument, if it could be shown that they are empirically correct, would only be valid arguments if there is no significant contribution of (neo)colonialism to underdevelopment. The progress argument is therefore essential to the defense of colonialism. It is evident however that the link between (neo)colonialism and underdevelopment is far too complex to establish a definitive conclusion on the net benefit of (neo)colonialism. Nonetheless, I have shown that colonialism has contributed, and neocolonialism still contributes significantly to underdevelopment. Still, the progress argument can be put forward to justify this contribution, by emphasizing the benefits of (neo)colonialism. This account amounts to the moral dimension of the progress argument, which focusses not on determining the net benefit of (neo)colonialism, but which asserts that the benefits are sufficient to justify the harms. I have argued that this facet of the progress argument makes two errors. This is firstly that it fails to acknowledge that a colonial or neocolonial relation is one that does not reflect equality and reciprocity, and that it is therefore always a reprehensible type of relation. Finally, the progress argument ignores the unequal and unjust distribution of benefits from neocolonialism. My conclusion is therefore that neocolonial exploitation is an issue that remains to be addressed. The defense of neocolonialism is inadequate to counter and dismiss the exploration of pathways to development that encompass decreased involvement of the core with the periphery.

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