



# *Africa and Europe: a contemporary colonial relationship?*

A case study on the inequality in resources and power between the African and European continent in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic

*'As modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and every day'* (Mignolo, 2018, p.23)

*Master thesis*

Djenabou Diallo (590819)

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## **Abstract**

This article reviews how coloniality structured uneven distribution of resources and power between the African and European continent in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The evidence found indicates that there is an ongoing pattern of colonial power, but in a more subtle form. This control has led to the possibility for Europe to hold resources, such as vaccinations and the intellectual property for the COVID-19 vaccines, and have authority over the aid and investments which they provide to Africa. This has established an uneven structure of resources and power, which can be traced to the colonial period. The intention of this research was not to oppose other explanations for the inequality between the African and European continents, but rather to look into how the inequality and its explanations were rooted in coloniality.

*Keywords: COVID-19, Coloniality, Decoloniality, Dependency, Pandemic*

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# 1. Introduction

The unexpected outbreak of COVID-19 has overwhelmed the global healthcare systems, and countries needed to amend their health policy (Tatar et al., 2021). The pandemic uncovered the distinctive ways of decision making and how governments strategize during a crisis, but it also exposed the international system that establish unequal access to resources, such as COVID-19 vaccinations. According to the World Health Organization (2021), the vast majority of the vaccines were administrated in high- and upper-middle-income countries right after the development and distribution of the vaccines. The negligence of aiming for vaccine equity took its toll on the most vulnerable and poorest people in the world. In mid-December 2021, the president of Ghana, Nana Akufo-Addo, warned EU lawmakers that hoarding vaccines and vaccine nationalism could obstruct vaccination efforts in Africa (Agence France-Presse, 2021). In spite of the urgency to equally distribute and give worldwide access to the COVID-19 vaccines with the hope for slowing the coronavirus pandemic and saving lives, there was a lack of speed in the global efforts to secure equitable vaccine delivery. In addition, the global response to the pandemic had components tied to coloniality. According to Schinkel (2021), the management of the pandemic was strongly shaped by colonial modes of knowledge. It is argued that the international pandemic response was based on a Western conceptualization of health (Schinkel, 2021; Evans, 2021). According to Evans (2021), this led to a global response which paid not enough attention to the non-Western states and therefore disproportionately protected the Western population more than others. So, the pandemic has uncovered the inequality between different countries, but especially between European and African countries. Some argue that the inequality is the cause of bad governance and corruption that led to the underdevelopment of Africa and therefore causes economic and social indifferences between the African continent and Europe continent (Muluneh, 2018), and that these indifferences become evident in moments such as a pandemic. Others argue that these economic and social indifferences are the consequences of inadequate infrastructure on the African continent. This creates a divide between Europe and Africa, with Europe being further developed (Muluneh, 2018). But even with these different explanations, what remains unclear is the root of this inequality between these two continents and how coloniality plays a role. For this reason, this research will focus on the root of this inequality with the pandemic as its framework.

Therefore, the research question will be: *How does coloniality structure the uneven distribution of resources and power between European and African countries during the Covid-19 pandemic?*

In this research, I draw upon decolonial theory and neocolonialism to create a framework to demonstrate the historical and contemporary system that sustain and maintain inequality in resources and power between the European and African continent. Studies about global inequality are often focused on the living conditions of people, such as income, health and education (Held & Kaya, 2007; Muñoz, 2019). Instead of focusing on the living conditions, the aim is to demonstrate the relationships between the two continents in order to explain the inequality through existing theory, such as decoloniality. This research is not an opposition towards other explanations on inequality, such as the economic indifferences or dissimilar domestic affairs (Muluneh, 2018). This research, however, looks into how these differences are rooted in coloniality and takes present in the contemporary relationship between Europe and Africa. The aim is to contribute to the knowledge of decoloniality and coloniality in present time by using the pandemic as a framework. Not many researches about the pandemic is done through the lens of decoloniality. Another goal is to bring light to a different focus point that explains the global disproportion in resources and power, and moreover, the inequality between European and African countries.

In the next chapter, I elaborated on the theories that are used to answer the research question. This chapter will be followed by the research design, where I explained how this research is conducted. Then, I continued with sharing the results and discussion, and ended this thesis with the conclusion and reflection.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

This chapter introduces the theoretical framework which guides this research. Decolonial theory and Neocolonialism serve as guidelines and tools to analyze and explain the historical and contemporary relationships and infrastructure between European countries and African countries. This research brings attention to the concept of decoloniality through Mignolo's perception of the indivisibility of the concepts modernity/coloniality and decoloniality in order to demonstrate the present-time power relations between European and African countries. In addition, this research puts emphasis on the conceptualization of dependency of countries to elucidate the inequality of resources between them. The aim is to create a framework to demonstrate and explain the existence and persistence of inequality in resources and power between two continents.

### **2.1 Decolonial Theory**

Decoloniality has a history of more than 500 years and can be described as a reaction to coloniality (Mignolo, & Walsh, 2018). According to Walsh (2018, p. 17), it does not imply the absence of coloniality, on the contrary, it implies the recognition of ongoing colonial process and undoing of hierarchal structures which are clearly entwined with global capitalism and Western modernity. These structures of race, gender, heteropatriarchy and class control life, knowledge and capital.

#### **2.1.1 Decolonization and decoloniality: there is a difference**

Before we deepen ourselves in knowledge about decoloniality, it is important to clarify the difference between decolonization and decoloniality. For some, decolonization refers to the historical period and process of (European) colonial powers moving out of colonial states, predominately in the twentieth century prior to the founding of independent nation states and the election of local political leaders (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019). But for others, decolonization refers to the physical, political shift of power between colonial relations (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Whereas, decoloniality, refers to the undoing of ways of thinking and acting that become the norm during colonialism. The concept has historical roots, but referring to the views of Mignolo (2007, p. 459), it *'means working towards a vision of human life that is not dependent upon or structured by the forced imposition of one ideal of society over those that differ, which is what modernity/coloniality does and, hence, where decolonialization of the mind should*

*begin*'. The reason why this research will predominantly focus on decoloniality instead of decolonization is to refrain from limiting the framework to just the historical part as the aim is to look into the contemporary structures and affairs.

### **2.1.2 The conceptual triad: Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality**

Mignolo (2018) stated that the concept of decoloniality discloses coloniality to be the darker side of modernity. Referring to his view, it would not exist without modernity/coloniality - the “/” emphasizes the interrelatedness and indivisibility of the concepts - as there would be nothing to decolonize. Therefore, he argues that decoloniality cannot be understood without understanding modernity/coloniality. This conceptual triad indicates a complex structure that needs to be unfold.

Starting with *Modernity*. According to Enrique Dussel (2000), it is for many an exclusively European phenomenon with a non-European alterity, focused on emancipation and the possibility of new development. Dussel (2000) appoints it as Eurocentric, as it indicates an intra-European phenomenon without making recourse to anything outside Europe. It can be understood as *'the unfolding of new possibilities derived from its - meaning Europe's - centrality in world history and the corollary constitution of all other cultures as its periphery* (Dussel, 2000, p. 471)'. In spite of the fact that all cultures are ethnocentric, Dussel (2000) argues that modern European ethnocentrism might be the only one that pretend to claim universality for itself, and this cannot be understood irrespective of coloniality, because it was and continues to be constitutive of modernity (Mignolo, 2007, p. 466).

The concept of *coloniality* was introduced by sociologist Anibal Quijano, who argues that there is an ongoing pattern of colonial power (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). He identified four key levers of coloniality: control of the economy, control of authority, control of gender and sexuality and the control of knowledge and subjectivity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). Building on the work of Quijano, Mignolo (2018) elaborate on the concept and argued it to be a decolonial concept, which did not emerge in Europe to account for issues of European concern, but it was created in the Third World, as a response to needs which were prompted by local histories of coloniality in the twentieth century (Mignolo, 2018, p. 112). According to him, coloniality mutated decolonization into decoloniality and decolonial thinking.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, decoloniality refers to the undoing of ways of thinking and acting that become the norm during colonialism (Mignolo, 2007). Decoloniality is premised on three units of analysis. First, is the concept of *coloniality of power*, which helps

with the investigation of how the current ‘global political’ was constructed and constituted into a racially hierarchized, Euro-American-centric, patriarchal, hegemonic modern power structure (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). In other words, coloniality of power is used to analyze the modern global geopolitics of power. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni, the second concept is *coloniality of knowledge*, based on the politics of knowledge generation, which helps to understand how certain knowledge has been pushed as irrelevant knowledge and ‘Westernized’ universities have been built globally that decolonial theorists want to decolonize. The final concept is *coloniality of being*, which is focused on ‘*the modern subjectivities and issues of human ontology*’ (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 490). An example is the resisting objectification and dehumanization of Black people, that evoke questions with reference to humanism as politicized states of existence. Decoloniality indicates the liberation from coloniality as a *complex matrix of knowledge, power and being* with the aim to decolonize the hegemonic modern/colonial and Eurocentred paradigm (Mignolo, 2007).

## **2.2 Neocolonialism**

According to Kwame Nkrumah (1965), Neocolonialism is the idea that control and power over the states and economies of the ex-colonies has been retained by the former colonizing powers. Nkrumah’s explanation for this phenomenon is the fact that former colonial territories must rely upon the former imperial power, because they are incapable of independent development due to the political and economic global system. Even though, the African countries are sovereign in theory and formal colonialism has ended, in reality the contemporary economic system and political policy increases the gap between the rich and poor countries of the world (Rao, 2000). Rao states that Marx’s view of struggle between classes has been replaced by a struggle between nations, which are both the result of capitalism and can be explained through dependency theory.

### **2.2.1 Dependency theory**

This theory analyzes and explains the economic development and underdevelopment of states within the international system (Romaniuk, 2017). Romaniuk explains three main characteristics of dependency theory. First, the international system consists of two kinds of states: *dominant* and *dependent*. Further, dependency theory states that external forces are critical in terms of economic activity of dependent states. Walter Rodney (2018) argues that European states don’t have interest in allowing other states to develop and that legal measures



on an international level favor European countries over others. Lastly, relationships, which are based on strongly historical patterns and the internationalization of capitalism, between dominant and dependent states are identified as a vibrant process, with exchanges taking place between the states playing a '*considerable role in the reinforcement of patterns of inequality*' (Romaniuk, 2017, p. 482).

Although, dependency theory has its limitations in explaining the rise of newly industrialized countries. The theory is useful for this research as it applicable to the study of state impoverishment and the world system in the 21st century (Romaniuk, 2017). Therefore, this theory is a tool to analyze the current patterns of inequality between European and African countries and can explain the international system of vaccination distribution.

### **3. Research design**

This chapter outlines the research question and the methods which were used to gather and analyze data.

#### **3.1 Research question**

As introduced in the first chapter, the research question is:

*How does coloniality structure the uneven distribution of resources and power between European and African countries during the Covid-19 pandemic?*

#### **3.2 Method**

This research design is a case study with the aim to gain contextual, in-depth knowledge about the existence and persistence of inequality in resources and power between European and African countries. These two continents were chosen due to their colonial ties. The focus of this case is the relationship between Europe and Africa during the pandemic and how the vaccination was distributed. This case is a representative/typical case, or as Bryman calls it, an exemplifying case (Yin, 2017; Bryman, 2016). Not because the COVID-19 pandemic is a commonplace situation, but because the case does exemplify a broader category of global health situations and the distribution of resources. In addition, the case provides a suitable context for this research question as it focuses on the vaccination distribution and relationship between European and African countries. Therefore, the analysis contributes to the explanation of this broader phenomenon.

##### ***Data and analysis***

In order to collect data, content analysis was used. In order to have a better understanding of the relationship between Europe and Africa and the vaccination distribution, reports and press articles from the European Union websites and the African Union website were used at first. These reports and articles were all published between May 2020 and February 2022. Further, all used reports and articles from the European Union websites were related to the topics COVID-19 and Africa/African Union. Also, all used reports and articles from the African Union website involved the topics COVID-19 and Europe/European Union. In addition, a handful of news articles were used that validated the information which was published on the

European Union and African Union websites. Ultimately, scientific articles were used to connect the data with theory.

For analyzing the aforementioned qualitative data, *ground theory* was used as framework by means of theoretical sampling which according to Bryman (2016, p. 411) ‘*is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges*’. After collecting the data, open coding was implemented to examine, compare and conceptualize the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The concepts were turned into categories, whereafter the use of axial coding connected the categories. The data that was coded was the reports and press articles from the website. It was used as basis to build the arguments for this thesis, which were backed up by scientific articles. The use of a qualitative research design based on a case study might evoke some concerns regarding jeopardizing the generalizability (Bryman, 2016, p. 399). However, the aim is not to use this single case study to represent a phenomenon, but the aim is to contribute to its explanation.

### **3.3 Positionality, Ethics and Privacy considerations**

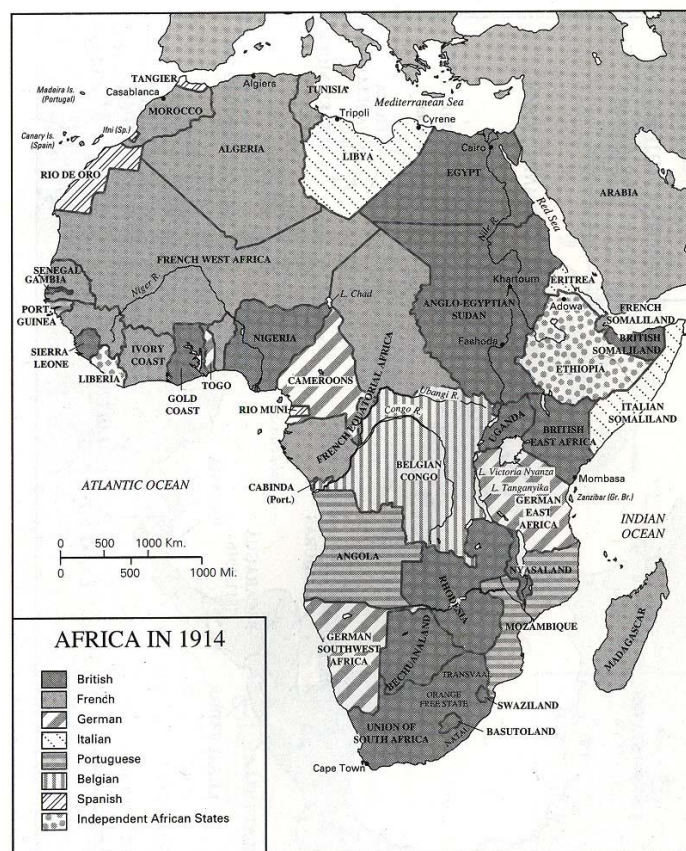
According to Bryman (2016, p. 305), ‘*coders must draw upon their everyday knowledge in order to be able to code the material with which they are confronted*’. My knowledge about the relationship between Africa and Europe after Africa’s independency was limited. Thus, it was important to collect as much data possible about it to gain a better understanding, certainly with the theoretical knowledge that I do possess. Because I have west-African roots, I have been extra interested to do this research. But my positionality was something that I had to stay conscious about during the process, by being aware of my own thoughts and opinions.

The research did not involve human participants. Moreover, all the documents that were analyzed are published online and are available for the public. As most of the used data were from websites of international organizations or scientific articles, it was not needed to protect the confidentiality or anonymity of the individuals (Bryman, 2016, 679). No personal data was collected. In Appendix II the checklist of ethical and privacy aspects of research can be found.

## 4. History

In order to understand the contemporary dynamic between Africa and Europe, one must examine the past. Therefore, this chapter will discuss the major agreements which highlight the (economic) relationship between these two continents since the process of decolonization, starting with the Treaty of Rome which was established in 1957. According to the European Community Information Service (1966), the treaty was drawn up to establish economic union between six West-European countries: *Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands*. In this treaty, arrangements were also made for non-European colonies and dependent countries of the four countries: *Belgium, France, Italy and the Netherlands*. Money was allocated from funds to help the economic and social development of these dependencies (European Community Information Service, 1966; Zartman, 1976). But these dependencies were also associated with the European Community, meaning that these countries joined the free trade area, wherefore African and European products had access to each other's market (Zartman, 1976). This agreement changed the bilateral colonial ties through multilateralization. The connection between the African and European continents extended beyond the familiar bilateral colonial ties. Six years later, in 1963, the first Yaoundé Convention was signed, transforming the unilateral arrangements into a negotiated association between the European Economic Community (EEC) and 18 individual African States (Zartman, 1976). There were no significant changes compared to the agreements which were made in the Treaty of Rome. However, there were safeguard clauses permitting African tariffs for industrial and development purposes, and a second European Development Fund (EDF) was set up. The EDF was the main EEC aid for development cooperation in Africa. The first Yaoundé Convention was valid for five years and got renewed for another five years in 1969. But the negotiations were more strained than the first time due to opposing views between the EEC member states on the question of cooperation with the African countries (Zartman, 2017). Decisions were made by the EEC member states, with only a restricted possibility for adjustments by the African countries. Following this agreement, there is the Lomé Convention, signed in 1975, which institutionalized a broader multilateral relationship between the European Economic Community and African, Caribbean and Pacific states (ACP). It provided duty- and quota-free access to Europe and aid from the ECC to the other states (Gruhn, 1976). The duty-free access was for most ACP agricultural products and mineral exports. This was non-reciprocal, meaning that it did not require ACP countries to, in return, grant EEC countries duty-free access to their markets. But this changed when the Lomé Convention got replaced by the Cotonou Agreement

(Abimola, 2021). The Cotonou Agreement was signed in 2000. With this agreement, the European Union, in lieu of the European Economic Community, is allowed to be more flexible and selective regarding the way it provides aid to countries, known as the performance-based partnerships. This means that the EU can decide to give more money to countries that perform ‘good’ and reduces money from countries that are not performing according to their standards. The ongoing negotiations and agreements now fall under the Economic Partnership Agreements, which dates back to the signing of the Cotonou Agreement. Overall, the agreements, made over a period of decades, show a shift of bilateral ties between the African and European continent, due to colonization, into a unilateral tie which goes beyond the African content. A partnership was not restricted any longer to a few African countries, it transformed into multilateral continent-to-continent ties. Based on agreements, trade is being regulated and the European countries are engaged in providing aid to the African countries in order to improve their development. But these agreements also show that the African countries were dependent on funds received from the European states. Every agreement shows an arrangement for aid. In the following chapters, the development of this relationship will be discussed and explained.



(Murphy, 2011)

## 5. Control of Economy and Authority

After Africa received its independence, there remained a donor-recipient relationship between the European and African continent (Smith & Jeppesen, 2017). Europe, with its political influence and economic preponderance, kept a continuing presence on the continent, but *'in more subtle forms'* (Zartman, 2017, p.325). As discussed in the previous chapter, the donor-recipient bond is evident, and is also during the pandemic a distinct feature of the partnership between these two continents. This chapter explains their relationship during the pandemic.

### 5.1 Strong Partnership: neighbors and close partners

The unexpected outbreak of COVID-19 overwhelmed the global healthcare systems, and countries needed to amend their health policy (Tatar et al., 2021). But the fight against COVID-19 was not only fought on a national level. According to the European Commission (n.d.), *'a global pandemic requires a global solution'*. The EU started initiatives to help other continents that were also struggling with the pandemic, with one of those continents being Africa. The European Union and the African Union accentuated their partnership during the pandemic.

“Global solidarity is key to fighting COVID-19. This is why in these difficult times partnership between Team Europe and the African Union is as strong and reliable as ever”

- Ranieri Sabatucci  
(African Union, 2020)

According to Sabatucci, the former ambassador of the European Union to the African Union, there is a strong and reliable partnership between the EU and AU. He argues that the way Europe has experienced the pandemic made it clear that the solution lies within a continental approach, therefore he believes that a continental response is essential for Africa to fight the COVID-19 pandemic (Africa Union, 2020). He presumes that the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is in a privileged position to coordinate, because of its experience in dealing with epidemics. The CDC is the public health agency of the African Union. However, Sabatucci is not the only one that focusses on the partnership between Europe and Africa during the pandemic. According to the African Union (2020), the Director of Africa CDC, Dr. John Nkengasong, wishes the same. He said:

“This pandemic is a global challenge and it requires everybody working together with a unique level of cooperation. We need to quickly scale up testing and contact tracing, we must deploy more healthcare workers and keep feeding the supply chain component. All these require strong partnerships. We deeply appreciate this timely contribution by the European Union towards achieving the goals of PACT in Africa.”

(African Union, 2020)

Pact stands for Partnership to Accelerate COVID-19 Testing, which was introduced by the Africa CDC in order to test, trace and treat the COVID-19 cases in Africa (Africa CDC, 2020). Here, Dr Nkengasong is referring to the contribution by the European Union which was a pledged amount of 5 billion euros for Africa. Regardless of the fact that both sides are referring to a partnership/cooperation between these two continents. It is yet unclear what this partnership entails. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen stated the following:

“Africa is our neighbour and close partner. We want to overcome this pandemic together. Europe can benefit a lot from Africa's very young and dynamic economy. Our Team Europe initiatives therefore focus on boosting young entrepreneurship and supporting small businesses, which are the backbone of the African economy. And Europe will invest in more resilient African health systems and local vaccine production.”

Even though, Von der Leyen argues that Europe can benefit from Africa's economy, it is not specified how Europe can benefit from its economy. Consistently, when there is spoken of a partnership or cooperation, it is not particularized how Europe benefits from the cooperation. Therefore, the next paragraph looks deeper into the donor-recipient relationship during the pandemic.

## **5.2 Donor-recipient vs Mutualistic relationship**

The EU wants to move beyond the donor-recipient relationship with Africa and aims for a partnership of equals. The EU is the leading aid, investment and trade actor across the continent (European Commission, 2020). Simultaneously, African exports of chemicals, raw materials, minerals, and agricultural goods remains to be the mainstay of many European industries

(Islam, 2021). The European Commissioner for International Partnerships, Jutta Urpilainen, said:

“The EU is joining up with key African partners to promote global recovery, in line with our Africa Strategy. In less than one year, we have together mobilised €8 billion to help Africa address the health and socio-economic crises resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Our commitment today is to help micro-businesses and start-ups raise the finance they need to launch or expand, and support efforts to improve the investment climate. By doing so, we are walking the talk when it comes to solidarity with our African partners, involving the young generations, at this crucial juncture.”

(European Commission, 2021b)

As mentioned before, the EU is the leading actor of aid and investment in Africa (European Commission, 2020). But the EU also get criticized, as it dominates the management of the donated aid. According to Oxfam, funds are increasingly tied to domestic policy priorities of EU member states (Oxfam, 2020). Thus, the EU dictated how Africa should spend the aid and therefore has authority over the donated funds.

In spite of that, the EU continuously shows commitment and acknowledges the partnership that it has with the African continent. Europe is the first investor in Africa and remains one of the biggest investors (Gebre, 2022). The investment is not only beneficial for Africa, but also for Europe. In 2018, Europe had a stock of 235 billion euros in Foreign Direct Investment in Africa (European Commission, 2021b). Foreign direct investment (FDI) is *‘an investment from a party in one country into a business or corporation in another country with the intention of establishing a lasting interest’* (Corporate Finance Institute, 2022). In addition, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen mentioned the following:

“As Africa sets sail on the future, the European Union wants to be Africa’s partner of choice.

It means remaining an economic partner you can trust and the European Union is the first trading partner and the first investor in Africa.”

(Gebre, 2022)

But besides aid and investment, there is also debt, and due to the pandemic, Africa’s debt is increasing. The debt, however, can be traced to the colonial period (Omotola & Saliu, 2009). According to Ominode (2000), African foreign trade disclosed five major defects, which were



responsible for its debt: high export dependence; high concentration on a few commodities; low and declining terms of trade; high instability of exports earning due to these factors; and a chronic balance of payments crisis (Omotola & Saliu, 2009, p. 91). According to Omotola and Saliu (2009, p.91), *'these defects led to the disarticulation and distortion of Africa's colonial economy and the late decolonization of the region'*. Upon this fragile economic base, most African countries attained political independence (Ominode, 2000). This position was the inability of many, at that time, new African economies to withstand post-colonial disturbances, including internal affairs (Omotola & Saliu, 2009). The defects, which were consequences of European colonialism, laid the foundation of Africa's debt crisis, which remains till this day (Debuysere, 2020). Based on this fact, it is argued that the EU should take the lead in cancelling Africa's debt during the pandemic. Not only does the influence of Europe trace back to colonialism, European countries, along with the US and Japan, dominate the governance and agenda-setting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and thus hold up responsibility of its policies (Debuysere, 2020). At the beginning of the pandemic, Africa's debt was estimated at 417 billion dollars, including debt owed to multilateral organizations such as the World Bank, IMF and the EU (Debuysere, 2020).

### **5.3 Ongoing Pattern of Colonial Power**

Despite the equal relationship that Europe tries to create with Africa, moving beyond the donor-recipient bond, there is underlying patterns of economic control and responsibility that the EU has. Europe decides how Africa spends the funds it receives and the European continent hold up influence in Africa's current debts, while being the cause of it. But what can be noticed here is the *decoloniality* of the donor-recipient relationship. According to Walsh (2018, p. 17), decoloniality, does not imply the absence of coloniality, rather it implies the recognition of ongoing colonial process and undoing of hierarchal structures which are clearly entwined with global capitalism and Western modernity. After a long period in which Europe donated money and where Africa was seen as the recipient, both continents are growing towards an equal partnership, with the aim to disconnect from a relationship that dates back to colonization. This does not imply that coloniality is absence, but it is a way of undoing the hierarchal structure. Because it is also clear that Europe has control over the way Africa manages its received aid, and it influences Africa's economy through its debts and investments. As decoloniality is connected to coloniality and modernity (Mignolo, 2018), Dussel (2000) argues that modernity is a way in which modern European ethnocentrism claim universality for itself. With the

control of aid and investment, Europe maintains its perspective and goal on the African continent in the way it believes that Africa should use their aid and investments. In addition, there is an ongoing pattern of colonial power between these two continents (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). According to sociologist Anibal Quijano, there are four key levers of coloniality: control of economy, control of authority, control of gender and sexuality and the control of knowledge and subjectivity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). This chapter shows that Europe has control of economy and control of authority. Therefore, coloniality is not absent. On the contrary, it is present in subtle forms.

Thus, the pandemic has showed that forms of coloniality are still present. Despite the strong partnership between the two continents, Europe holds power over Africa's aids and investment as a donor and big investor on the continent. Yet there is a form of decoloniality seen during this pandemic. The donor-recipient relationship is shifting towards a mutualistic relationship and both continents aim to be equal partners. Despite the ongoing colonial process, the two continents are working to change the hierarchal structure into an unranked, equal companionship.

## 6. Control of Authority and Knowledge

### 6.1 No one is safe until everyone is safe

The support of the European Union was not just restricted to funds. Its aim was to also make sure that COVID-19 vaccines would be distributed to Africa. According to the European Commission (n.d.), there was a commitment to ensure universal access to COVID-19 vaccines. The website of the European Commission (n.d.) stated the following:

“As stated by European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen, ‘no one is safe until everyone is safe’. That is why, in early 2021, the EU launched a humanitarian initiative to ensure that vaccines against COVID-19 would reach the most vulnerable populations living on the African continent.”

In order to reach this goal, COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) platform was established by the World Health Organization. Its assignment was to support the development and manufacture of COVID-19 vaccine candidates and to negotiate prices. The aim was to offer vaccines as fast as possible to developing countries regardless of their financial situation (Unmüßig & Sitenko, 2021). At the moment, approximately 190 countries participate in COVAX, including 92 low- and medium-income countries<sup>1</sup>, with a contribution of the European Union of one billion euros (European Commission, 2021a). But despite the goal to ensure universal access to the vaccines, reality shows a different picture, a picture of inequality. There is a global inequality regarding the access to COVID-19 vaccines (Alakija, 2022). Ayoade Alakija (2022, p. 171), the co-chair of the African Union Africa Vaccine Delivery Alliance (AVDA) argued that there is ‘*frustration due to the lack of speed in the global efforts to secure equitable vaccine delivery*’. According to the UN Secretary-General Antonia Guterres, by the end of February 2021, seventy-five percent of the vaccine produced was in the hands of ten countries. Meanwhile, the majority, more than 130 countries, had yet to receive their first dose (Andrew, 2021). And as of January 2022, just five percent of the low-income countries had been fully vaccinated and only eleven percent had received at least one dose of vaccine (Bahar, 2022). Ayoade Alakija (2022) stated:

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix I

"History will judge us harshly if we fail to stop this virus in its tracks. This is a pandemic of inequity and injustice, and of the rich versus the poor. This is a pandemic of man's inhumanity to man. If we do not share the tools to end this pandemic, we will continue in this endless cycle".

The immense divide in vaccination distribution between Europe and Africa has led to critique. Ghana's president, Nana Akufo-Addo, warned EU legislators that the so-called 'vaccine nationalism' and the hoarding of vaccines could obstruct vaccination efforts in Africa (The Guardian Nigeria, 2021). Also, the former health minister of Rwanda, Agnes Binagwaho, critiqued the EU by saying "*Be honest and say: 'My people first.' Don't lie to us and say we are equal.*" (Deutsche Welle, n.d.). But the EU did not only receive critique regarding their effort in the vaccination distribution process. The European Commission opposed to any temporary patent waiver, which also led to criticism (Unmüßig, 2022). African leaders remarked that they cannot solely rely on donations from the EU, and requested for patent waivers (Euronews, 2022). South African President Cyril Ramaphosa mentioned that '*governments that are really **serious** about ensuring that the world has access to vaccines should ensure that we approve the TRIPS waiver*' (ETUC, 2022). Moreover, the president of the African Union stated the following:

"It's not a failure at all. When there are two opposing positions, we try to find a compromise, a solution that allows both positions to be satisfied. Often, we were not listened to, I note a fundamental paradigm shift in the [EU-Africa] relationship, built on friendship, consideration, mutual listening and the search for common solutions."

(Euronews, 2022)

But according to the European Council President Charles Michel patent waiver is not an option. He perceives the intellectual property rights as a '*powerful lever to promote innovation and research*' (Euronews, 2022). Furthermore, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen stated that '*lifting patents is not a "quick fix" to rapidly develop local production capacity. It could also have significant negative consequences for the financing of innovation*' (Africanews, 2022). The disagreement for a waiver means that a couple of major pharmaceutical companies can prevent other manufacturers from producing COVID-19 vaccines, which impedes the manufacturing of the COVID-19 vaccines in developing countries (European Economic and Social Committee, 2021).

## 6.2 Historical patterns: Dominant and dependent states

The previous paragraph shows how the European Union aimed for global equity and cooperation during the pandemic. But the pandemic uncovered forms of inequality when looking into the process of providing global access to COVID-19 vaccines (Alakija, 2022). Not only was Europe critiqued for the slow speed of the vaccination distribution, after hoarding vaccines for its own countries, but also for the refusal for patent waivers. Despite the multiple remarks by the EU for assurance and cooperation in order to make sure that Africa has enough resources to fight against the pandemic (European Commission, n.d.). This pandemic reveals the European countries as *dominant states* and African countries as *dependent states*. The European Union is *dominant*, because it can afford to buy vaccines, and holds power to decide whether or not to agree to patent waivers as a consequence of the major vaccine manufacturers which are established on its continent. The African Union rely on the European Union for access to vaccination as well as the patent waivers. According to Oxfam, the EU had to throw away 55 million doses of COVID vaccines by the end of February 2022, more than the 30 million doses that they have donated to Africa so far at that time. Meanwhile, almost 9 out of 10 people in Africa are not fully vaccinated (2022).

That the European countries are considered dominant states and the African countries as dependent states is nothing new. This is based on strongly historical patterns and the internationalization of capitalism that formed this type of relationship between these two continents (Romaniuk, 2017). According to Romaniuk (2017, p. 482), this kind of relationship plays a role in the reinforcement of patterns of inequality. Patent waivers are being rejected because it would negatively influence the financing for innovation and research (Africanews, 2022). Even though, it might not be a 'quick fix' as European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has mentioned, African leaders addressed that they cannot rely on just donations and see patent waivers as another solution that can help them fight the pandemic (Euronews, 2022). There is clearly a gap between Europe and Africa. Rao (2000) argues that even though formal colonialism has ended and African countries are sovereign, in reality the contemporary economic system and political policy increases the gap between rich and poor countries of the world. African countries are not able to afford these COVID-19 vaccines. Taken into consideration that a dose of Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine from the EU costs 19,50 euros and that

Moderna is asking 25.50 US dollar (21,44 euros)<sup>2</sup> for a dose (Khan, 2021). While, British researchers from Imperial College London argued that in mass production conditions a dose of mRNA vaccine can be made for just 1.18 to 2.85 US dollars (0,99 to 2,40 euros)<sup>3</sup>. According to Kwame Nkrumah (1965), neocolonialism is the idea that control and power over the states of the ex-colonies has been retained by the former colonizing powers. Even though, there is no direct control within the continent. The decisions and actions of the EU impact the African continent. Not agreeing to a patent waiver is a way of controlling the knowledge. Even though, African countries would be able to make COVID-19 vaccines in order to increase the process of vaccination distribution on the continent, they can be obstructed by the major manufactures. The argument is not that policy regarding intellectual property should be changed entirely. But the argument is that the European Union choses to focus on what a patent waiver could do to the financing of innovation and the power lever that comes with it, instead of the urgency of the pandemic and especially the current state in Africa, that rely on the European Union (European Economic and Social Committee, 2021).

Two of the aforementioned key levers of coloniality are control of authority and the control of knowledge and subjectivity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). As two key levers has been discussed in the previous chapter, two of the four key levers are evident in this chapter. As Europe being the dominant continent, it has authority over Africa, as the latter continent is dependent. Not only is Europe financially able to obtain vaccines, they can decide what to do with them. Even though, the aim was to have an equitable global vaccine delivery. It is shown that there is an inequality in the distribution between Europe and Africa, with Europe having too many vaccines, so much that a great portion has to disposed, and Africa not even having enough to sustain everyone with their first dose of vaccine.

Thus, regardless of the fact that Europe does not have a direct influence on the African continent since the independence of the African countries, there remains a historical pattern of a dominant and dependent continent, which makes Africa rely on Europe and gives Europe tools to control the affairs on the African continent. The pandemic has made this evident. Even though, Europe claims to aim for a global equity of the vaccine distribution and is cooperating with Africa, reality shows that their control has led to an enormous inequality in resources during the pandemic.

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<sup>2</sup> Currency on 1 Augustus 2021

<sup>3</sup> Currency on 1 Augustus 2021

## 7. Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed inequality between European and African countries. The aim was to understand how coloniality structured uneven distribution of resources and power between the two continents. This can be understood through the control of knowledge, authority and economy which Europe has that can be dated back to coloniality. There is an ongoing pattern of colonial power, but just in subtle forms, instead of the direct power that Europe used to have over the African continent (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). This ongoing pattern of colonial power can be explained in two main ways which are related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

First, Europe and Africa have a donor-recipient relationship. This is an unequal relationship that stems back from the decolonization period. After colonization, Africa was reliant on funds which it received from Europe in order to gain development. Then, but also now during the pandemic, Europe remains having control over these funds as it decides how the money should be spent. According to Oxfam, funds are increasingly tied to domestic policy priorities of EU member states (Oxfam, 2020). Also, Africa's debt can be traced to the colonial period, which was the cause of five major defects. The debt is only increasing during the pandemic. Further, through direct investments in the African continent, Europe holds control over these investments and therefore also Africa's economy. Therefore, it shows that Europe still has control of economy and authority, even if it is subtle compared to colonization.

Second, there remains a historical pattern of dominant and dependent states which leads to inequality between the African and European continent. Not only is Africa dependent on Europe's lack of speed in vaccination distribution, but the European Commission's refusal for a patent waiver has led to an enormous indifference between the amount of vaccines the continents have and how many people are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 (Alakija, 2022). It shows how Europe has control of knowledge and authority, because Africa cannot manage the COVID-19 pandemic fast enough without enough vaccinations and a patent waiver (Unmüßig, 2022).

In addition, Africa and Europe are aiming for an equal partnership (European Commission, 2020). They want to move beyond the donor-recipient relationship, which can be contemplated as a form of decoloniality. According to Walsh (2018, p. 17), decoloniality, does not imply the absence of coloniality, rather it implies the recognition of ongoing colonial process and undoing of hierarchical structures. Therefore, this does not contradict the presence of colonial power, in subtle forms, in present time, but it shows that the European Union and

African Union would like to change the hierarchal structures in their (donor-recipient) partnership which is connected to colonial period, and move forward to a mutualistic relationship.

Thus, the colonial divide remains present because Europe is able to have control over Africa economy, authority and its knowledge, only in subtle forms compared to colonization. This control has led to the possibility for Europe to hold resources, such as vaccinations and the intellectual property for the COVID-19 vaccines, and have authority over the aid and investments which they provide to Africa. This has established an uneven structure of resources and power, which can be traced to the colonial period. In addition, the aim to for these two continents to reach an equal partnership, is a way of working towards a structure that is disconnected from the current relationship which is based on their colonial ties. It is a form of decoloniality. So, even though, the pandemic has showed that coloniality holds present till this day and age which causes inequality between African and European countries, there is also a subtle form of decoloniality, which shows that both can be present at the same time.

This research has showed how coloniality structured uneven distribution of resources and power between the two continents during the pandemic. The intention of this research was never to oppose other explanations for the inequality between the African and European continent, rather the aim was to look into how these different explanations were rooted in coloniality. Yet it is also not argued that this is the one and only reason to explain how inequalities are rooted in coloniality. The COVID-19 pandemic was used as a framework to understand the inequalities between Africa and Europe. This research focused on the relationship between these continents, other factors such as domestic infrastructure or other affairs, such as national health policy, were not included, but could give more insight in future research.



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## Appendix I: List of Low- and Medium-income countries (Gavi, 2020)

Afghanistan	Eswatini	Mauritania	Solomon Islands
Algeria	Ethiopia	Micronesia	Sri Lanka
Angola	Fiji	Moldova	St. Lucia
Bangladesh	Gambia	Mongolia	St. Vincent and the Grenadines
Benin	Ghana	Morocco	Sudan
Bhutan	Grenada	Mozambique	Syria
Bolivia	Guinea	Myanmar	Tajikistan
Burkina Faso	Guinea-Bissau	North Korea	Tanzania
Burundi	Guyana	Nepal	Timor-Leste
Cabo Verde	Haiti	Nicaragua	Togo
Cambodia	Honduras	Niger	Tonga
Cameroon	India	Nigeria	Tunisia
Central African Republic	Indonesia	Pakistan	Tuvalu
Chad	Kenya	Papua New Guinea	Uganda
Comoros	Kiribati	Philippines	Ukraine
Congo	Kosovo	Rwanda	Uzbekistan
Côte d'Ivoire	Kyrgyzstan	Samoa	Vanuatu
Dem. Rep.	Lesotho	São Tomé and Príncipe	Vietnam
Djibouti	Liberia	Senegal	West Bank and Gaza
Dominica	Madagascar	Sierra Leone	Yemen
Egypt	Malawi	Somalia	Zambia
El Salvador	Maldives	South Korea	Zimbabwe
Eritrea	Mali	South Sudan	
	Marshall Islands		

## Appendix II: CHECKLIST ETHICAL AND PRIVACY ASPECTS OF RESEARCH

### INSTRUCTION

This checklist should be completed for every research study that is conducted at the Department of Public Administration and Sociology (DPAS). This checklist should be completed *before* commencing with data collection or approaching participants. Students can complete this checklist with help of their supervisor.

This checklist is a mandatory part of the empirical master's thesis and has to be uploaded along with the research proposal.

The guideline for ethical aspects of research of the Dutch Sociological Association (NSV) can be found on their website ([http://www.nsv-sociologie.nl/?page\\_id=17](http://www.nsv-sociologie.nl/?page_id=17)). If you have doubts about ethical or privacy aspects of your research study, discuss and resolve the matter with your EUR supervisor. If needed and if advised to do so by your supervisor, you can also consult Dr. Jennifer A. Holland, coordinator of the Sociology Master's Thesis program.

### PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Project title: Master's Thesis, master Sociology

Name, email of student: Djenabou Diallo, 590819dd@eur.nl

Name, email of supervisor: Bonnie French, french@essb.eur.nl

Start date and duration: April 4, 2022 through June 20, 2022

Is the research study conducted within DPAS **YES** - NO

If 'NO': at or for what institute or organization will the study be conducted?  
(e.g. internship organization)

## PART II: HUMAN SUBJECTS

1. Does your research involve human participants. YES - **NO**

*If 'NO': skip to part V.*

If 'YES': does the study involve medical or physical research? YES - NO  
Research that falls under the Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act ([WMO](#)) must first be submitted to [an accredited medical research ethics committee](#) or the Central Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects ([CCMO](#)).

2. Does your research involve field observations without manipulations that will not involve identification of participants. YES - NO

*If 'YES': skip to part IV.*

3. Research involving completely anonymous data files (secondary data that has been anonymized by someone else). YES - NO

*If 'YES': skip to part IV.*

### PART III: PARTICIPANTS

1. Will information about the nature of the study and about what participants can expect during the study be withheld from them? YES -  
NO
2. Will any of the participants not be asked for verbal or written 'informed consent,' whereby they agree to participate in the study? YES -  
NO
3. Will information about the possibility to discontinue the participation at any time be withheld from participants? YES - NO
4. Will the study involve actively deceiving the participants? YES -  
NO  
*Note: almost all research studies involve some kind of deception of participants. Try to think about what types of deception are ethical or non-ethical (e.g. purpose of the study is not told, coercion is exerted on participants, giving participants the feeling that they harm other people by making certain decisions, etc.).*
5. Does the study involve the risk of causing psychological stress or negative emotions beyond those normally encountered by participants? YES -  
NO
6. Will information be collected about special categories of data, as defined by the GDPR (e.g. racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a person, data concerning mental or physical health, data concerning a person's sex life or sexual orientation)? YES -  
NO
7. Will the study involve the participation of minors (<18 years old) or other groups that cannot give consent? YES -  
NO
8. Is the health and/or safety of participants at risk during the study? YES -  
NO
9. Can participants be identified by the study results or can the confidentiality of the participants' identity not be ensured? YES -  
NO
10. Are there any other possible ethical issues with regard to this study? YES -  
NO

If you have answered 'YES' to any of the previous questions, please indicate below why this issue is unavoidable in this study.

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What safeguards are taken to relieve possible adverse consequences of these issues (e.g., informing participants about the study afterwards, extra safety regulations, etc.).

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Are there any unintended circumstances in the study that can cause harm or have negative (emotional) consequences to the participants? Indicate what possible circumstances this could be.

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*Please attach your informed consent form in Appendix I, if applicable.*

*Continue to part IV.*

**PART IV: SAMPLE**

Where will you collect or obtain your data?

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*Note: indicate for separate data sources.*

What is the (anticipated) size of your sample?

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*Note: indicate for separate data sources.*

What is the size of the population from which you will sample?

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*Note: indicate for separate data sources.*

*Continue to part V.*

## Part V: Data storage and backup

Where and when will you store your data in the short term, after acquisition?

*The data will be stored on my laptop, which is password protected. I am the only one with access.*

*Note: indicate for separate data sources, for instance for paper-and pencil test data, and for digital data files.*

Who is responsible for the immediate day-to-day management, storage and backup of the data arising from your research?

*I am.*

How (frequently) will you back-up your research data for short-term data security?

*Once a week.*

In case of collecting personal data how will you anonymize the data?

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*Note: It is advisable to keep directly identifying personal details separated from the rest of the data. Personal details are then replaced by a key/ code. Only the code is part of the database with data and the list of respondents/research subjects is kept separate.*

## **PART VI: SIGNATURE**

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the ethical guidelines in the conduct of your study. This includes providing information to participants about the study and ensuring confidentiality in storage and use of personal data. Treat participants respectfully, be on time at appointments, call participants when they have signed up for your study and fulfil promises made to participants.

Furthermore, it is your responsibility that data are authentic, of high quality and properly stored. The principle is always that the supervisor (or strictly speaking the Erasmus University Rotterdam) remains owner of the data, and that the student should therefore hand over all data to the supervisor.

Hereby I declare that the study will be conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Department of Public Administration and Sociology at Erasmus University Rotterdam. I have answered the questions truthfully.

Name student: *Djenabou Diallo*

Name (EUR) supervisor: *Bonnie French*

Date: *20/03/2022*

Date: *20/03/2022*