



“AFRICA WILL NOT KNEEL”: EXAMINING IBRAHIM TRAORE’S RESISTANCE TO NEOCOLONIALISM IN HIS SPEECHES

Ayesha Shabbir
ayeshashabbir241@gmail.com

MPhil Scholar, Department of English Literature, The
University of Faisalabad, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan.

Dr. Rabia Khan
rabiakhan.ENG@tuf.edu.pk

Assistant Professor, Department of English Literature, The
University of Faisalabad, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan.

Abstract

This research closely examines the anti-imperialist narrative of Burkina Faso’s President Ibrahim Traore in his bold speeches. Traore is a young emerging voice of Africa which critiques the western dominance in Africa’s internal affairs using financial and military aids as a tool. Neocolonial theoretical framework has been used to uncover the resistance and history behind Traore’s stance. Concepts of famous scholars like Kwame Nkrumah, Frank and Walter Rodney have been employed in the research to have a deeper understanding of western tactics which they use to control the world. Great concepts of Pan-Africanism and anti-imperial resistance started their legacy from Thomas Sankara and still persist in Africa in the form of Ibrahim Traore. He uncovers the mask of sophisticated global platforms like World Bank and IMF which in Traore’s view are just sources to manipulate and control the developing countries. This research emphasizes that Traore’s speeches are not merely the critique of western elites, but they are a call to decolonize Africa both financially and ideologically. This study contributes to the ongoing debates of western unnecessary influence on countries like Nigeria and Burkina Faso, contributing to the awareness of global politics and dark realities behind apparently harmless institutions.

Keywords: *Ibrahim Traore, Neo-Colonialism, Decolonization, Africa, Pan-Africanism, IMF, West, Foreign Aids, Dominance.*

Corresponding Author: Dr. Rabia Khan (Assistant Professor, Department of English Literature, The University of Faisalabad, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan).
Email: rabiakhan.ENG@tuf.edu.pk

1. Introduction

Continent of Africa gained independence nearly six decades ago but the naked truth is that the majority of African nations is still operating as subordinate to the west. They are struggling with brutal form of western domination which is imposed on them through financial, ideological and military control, called Neo-colonialism. The irony is that they make countries rich with natural resources believe that they should take loans to make their nations prosper. They steal their minerals and assets in the name of making roads and projects, forcing them to stay poor as long as they live. President of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, claimed that neocolonialism is the worst form of imperialism (Nkrumah, 1965). In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Fanon also highlighted the ideological manipulation of post-colonial nations who start believing that they are actually poor and uncivilized.

Traore's speeches as transitional president of Burkina Faso, are a bold and resilient voice of resistance against western hegemony in the global landscape. He gave straightforward speeches at global forums like 2023 Russia–Africa Summit in St. Petersburg, the 2024 Alliance of Sahel States (AES) Summit in Niger, and the National Days of Patriotic Engagement in Ouagadougou, challenging the prevailing ignorant discourse about west's helpful role in regions like Africa. He rejects this notion firmly and claims that they pretend to be doctors but Africa has realized and experienced that their medicine is killing them instead of helping them. He opposes the practice of taking loans from IMF and World Bank as they are nothing but manipulation tools that capitalists use against countries they want to rule. He calls for his nation to unite against western interventions in Africa and to liberate themselves from ideological postcolonial identity crisis as this is the only route that goes to nation's sovereignty.

This research sees Traore's remarkable speeches as not only a political rhetoric but as a symbol of resistance against neocolonial practices which aim to control regions like Africa to keep them in the lowest place possible. Traore takes pride in his own nation and asserts with repetition in each of his speeches that Africa is a rich continent with every possible natural resource in it but the irony is that west portrays it as a poor country because this narrative makes room for them to give funds and open projects inside African countries in order to create a hegemonic control over its people and resources. This narrative of Traore can be best understood by placing it in a larger postcolonial discourse, connecting his speeches with past, present and upcoming future.

Traore has a new vision for Africa and he never hesitates to speak the truth about global politics. He fearlessly unveils the cruel and ugly faces of western imperialist practices in front of them. He aims for a self-determined and unapologetic Africa which

has ancestral pride in it rather than the poisonous inferiority complex that colonizers have been feeding this nation with. His speeches have a strong revolutionary style with poetic, literary and symbolic composition due to which many critics compare him with African leader Thomas Sankara. Traore's speeches are not only words organized into sentences but they are an act of ideological and epistemic decolonization. Traore explains that the west distorts the truth of Africa through media control, ugly diplomacy and discourse manipulation all around the world, an idea validated by Edward Said in ground-breaking work, *Orientalism* (Said, 1978). This research employs concepts of postcolonial paradigm and emphasizes that neocolonial critique should not stop as the west is still trying to control and manipulate other nation's resources and people.

1.1. Research Objectives

1. To analyze how Ibrahim Traore resists western neocolonial practices through his speeches
2. To examine the connection between postcolonial theory and Traore's narrative
3. To scrutinize western dependency tactics to control developing nations like Africa

1.2. Research Questions

1. What are the strategies that the west uses to dominate Africa and other developing countries with rich resources?
2. How do Ibrahim Traore's speeches resonate with the thoughts of postcolonial thinkers like Nkrumah?
3. Why are Traore's speeches seen as an act of ideological and literary decolonization rather than merely being a political rhetoric?

2. Literature Review

Alshaar (2025) explains the truth behind international firms and multinational business (MNCs) in countries that are developing such as Africa. He examines that these companies use manipulation tactics like stealing resources and monopolization of markets which help them to weaken the nation's place in the global market. Mireille et al, (2024) explain that western financial aid is not helping Africa but is being used to keep Africa in a continuous colonial hegemony. These financial institutions make such marketing and economic policies that enable foreign countries to benefit from Africa's rich natural resource and other countries like Nigeria, Sudan and Congo. Obikwelu(2023) uses a qualitative approach to uncover that previous colonizers continue to rule Africa by using

tools like multinational business organizations, global loan markets, foreign aids and trade where the west goes on taking advantage in terms of labour and resources but Africa stays poor. The researcher emphasizes that Africa should take control of its rich resources.

Alaye & Fakoya (2024) explains that globalization has become a vital means for nations to have international fair relations but this practice has created a bridge between developed and developing countries. This paves ways for the colonial legacy to persist even in modern times by promoting financial and economic control. Moyo (2024) critically analyzes the negative role of platforms like IMF, WTO and World Bank. These manipulative institutions provided financial dominance to the west by promoting privatization, unbalanced trade and deregulation mechanisms, benefiting multinational businesses and foreign investors rather than the African local population. Chowdhury (2022) explains the factors that lead to ongoing misrepresentation of marginalized nations like Africa which in his views are meta-ignorance and meta-sensitivity. Nations like Africa were misrepresented before as savage and brutal to justify the cruel act of colonialism and now after colonial reign has ended, these misrepresented notions still exist, perpetuating the modern form of colonization which is epistemic neocolonialism. Meta ignorance refers to the ignorance of researchers and scholars about the historical and political context of Africa. Meta-insensitivity occurs when researchers fail to portray the true lived experiences of marginalized people and communities.

Inyang & Hamilton (2025) shed light on the impact of neocolonial and imperial practices on the identity in African people. People, who are already the victim of lost and distorted self-identity as a result of long colonial history, further get into pitfalls of identity crisis when they experience economic dependence on those countries who once called them beggars and savages. These identity crises are also the major factors which weaken African leadership and nation's solidarity as Traore also addresses the youth that they should be proud of their culture, rich resources and ancestral legacy.

Ofori (2024) explains the psychological effects of colonial legacy on African nations. Africa in particular is a victim of slavery and colonial brutal history which turned African nations into traumatized people. Akinola (2012) investigates the role of foreign financial aid in the development of Africa. Akinola affirms that positive impact is very minimal but the cost that Africa is paying for this poisonous aid is quite lethal. Thapa (2020) uncovers the positive and negative role of foreign countries in the development of developing regions. Researchers like Jeffery Sachs believe that foreign aid is beneficial, reducing poverty rate in communities but thinkers like Moyo reject this superficial notion of portraying wealthy countries as teachers or helpers. According to them, these foreign aids do more bad than good as it reduces the export rate, increases corruption and makes countries dependent on foreign powers to even eat bread. Taşdelen(2024) acknowledges

the awakening of African nations particularly those who were previously French colonies. There are four phases of this African story which includes colonization, struggles for liberation, start of neocolonial practices or western domination and in the current times it is re-emerging struggle and resistance against western domination which can be called as second war of independence.

Ukpe (2021) conducts a case study of Nigeria to explore the connection between neocolonialism and increasing debt crisis in African countries. Ukpe concludes that the strict conditions and framework of international financial institutions serve as a tool of western domination. These loan schemes are a source to trap countries like Nigeria in a crippling debt crisis, ultimately compromising their economic independence and chances of sustainable development.

2.1. Research Gap

Although Neocolonialism and its effect on Africa has been analyzed by various scholars as explained in the literature review, there remains a gap when it comes to contemporary strong African voices of resistance against it. Speeches of Traore, who has become an international sensation due to his bold, truthful and lucid style, have not been researched yet. This research aims to fill this gap by analyzing speeches of President Traore, declaring them an act of ideological decolonization. This research significantly contributes to the contemporary discussions about neocolonial practices prevalent across the globe, particularly Africa by analyzing only 3 selected speeches of Traore.

3. Theoretical framework:

This research examines Traore's speeches regarding IMF and western domination tactics by grounding these speeches in a neocolonial framework. The manipulation strategies that the West uses to exercise regional hegemony including resource extraction, IMF, foreign aids and political interventions have been discussed with great focus in this study. Kwame Nkrumah's theory of Neocolonialism has been used as a primary theoretical lens to scrutinize Traore's anti-neocolonial narrative. Dependency theory with focus on thinkers Frank and Rodney has also been employed. This innovative approach helps to unveil the deeper symbolic meanings behind Traore's remarkable speeches that has become a matter of global interest.

In his ground-breaking work Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism, Kwame Nkrumah coined the term Neocolonialism, explaining that this neocolonial practices are more lethal than colonization itself as in this process the control is not gained

by direct rule but hegemony is forced through political, cultural and economic domination. He stated in his book that:

The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside. (Nkrumah, 1965)

In these historical remarks, Nkrumah clearly states neocolonial powers continue to rule Africa as Traore also validates this notion in his speeches by includes economic control through foreign aids, debt crisis through IMF, unbalanced trades through multinational companies and exploitation of rich resources of Africa. Global institutions including the World Bank and IMF are also a tool of the west to exercise control by imposing structural adjustment plans (SAPS) and strict conditions which in most cases enable foreign elites to expand their interests. Traore's views about foreign interference, exploitative nature of global institutions and need of Pan-Africanism are all well-articulated by Nkrumah.

Dependency theory was primarily originated by Latin American works of intellectuals published in the 1960s and 1970s but afterwards, it started to have its impact on African philosophy. This theory places developing countries in the periphery and the developed countries in the core of a circle. According to theorists, the periphery countries remain in phase of under-development because they are a part of global political mechanisms which are ruled by core countries. Andre Gunder Frank states that:

Underdevelopment is not traditional or original and that neither the past nor the present of the underdeveloped nations is in any significant sense analogous to the past of the now developed nations. The now developed nations were never underdeveloped, even though they were certainly undeveloped. (Frank, 1966)

Walter Rodney further explains the dependency theory. He observes that:

The neuropsychic slave trade was a three-cornered business. Africa belonged to that triangle, but as an exploited and underdeveloped junior partner. Colonialism was more than a system of exploitation, but one whose prime function was to remit the profits to the so-called 'mother country'. (Rodney, 1972)

Rodney, like Ibrahim Traore believes that Africa cannot reclaim its true identity until it eradicates foreign intervention from the country. Living in this circle, Africa continues to be at the periphery working only in the interest of core countries. By creating a link between Traore's speeches and neocolonial theoretical framework, this research aims to highlight the challenges faced by Burkina Faso and Africa due to neocolonialism.

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Examining anti-neocolonial narrative in Captain Ibrahim Traore's Speeches: A Theoretical Analysis

Captain Ibrahim Traore has gained international popularity and appreciation through his bold and unapologetic speeches. He openly talks about current geopolitics power structures and how they negatively influence Africa. His speeches are always grounded in historical deep knowledge and current global orders. This research deeply examines the anti-neocolonial narrative of Traore who rejects western hegemony in the world. Their tone about Africa is always like a master engaging with slaves when the very wealth they boast about comes from Africa's natural rich resources. The analysis of Traore's political rhetoric helps to understand neocolonialism in a better way.

Traore completely realizes that the majority of the nations of Africa are still under west's control even after decades of gaining independence as Nkrumah said that:

Neocolonialism enables a state to be in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty, yet in reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside. (Nkrumah, 1965)

Traore states fearlessly to west that Africa is not a passive entity whom you can easily manipulate and use in whatever way you want because Africa's gold and resources belong to Africa and its people only. He says, "Africa is not your experiment, your puppet, your warehouse of raw materials". He also adds:

Africa is not a battlefield. Africa is not your experiment, your puppet, your warehouse of raw materials. Africa is rising not to kneel, but to stand. And today I say before this great assembly of nations, Africa will not kneel. (Traore, 2023)

Through the use of strong imagery he shows the wound and pain of African people to the world. He announces with firm resolve that Africa will not kneel in front of western manipulative tactics. Traore states that:

Today, colonialism has a new face. It wears suits. It hosts forums. It signs contracts in Geneva and Paris and Washington. But it still takes without consent. It still dictates instead of dialogues. It still silences instead of listening. If you want to talk about peace, then let's begin by unlearning the arrogance that peace is something only you can teach us. (Traore, 2023)

Traore's explicit narrative about neocolonial practices are grounded in arguments given by Nkrumah who said that neocolonial powers gain domination over developing

countries not by military country but by apparently harmless legitimate economic and political institutions. Traore as a leader of Burkina Faso aims to win this battle against western domination with African unity.

4.2. Traore's criticism on foreign aids and IMF loan trap

In his most speeches, Traore critiques the working strategies of multinational companies and global financial forums like IMF and World Bank who in Traore's opinion work as a primary tool of colonialism and imperialism. This strategy of neocolonial powers to rule over countries by making them dependent on foreign aids has been explained in the best manner by theorists of dependency theory. Traore challenges these neocolonial powers directly in his speech stating that:

For decades you have sent us aid with one hand while taking our lifeblood from us with the other. You dig wells in our villages while your corporations suck the rivers dry. What sort of generosity is this? The sort that sustains a man just enough to make him a dependent. (Traore, 2023)

Through the use of literary and symbolic language, Traore explains the true intentions behind aid policies, claiming that they are only a tool to keep Africa as a dependent country. Traore believes that as long as developing nations keep getting these loans, they can never gain true liberation and sustainable development. He directly calls IMF a doctor whose medicine kills its patient instead of giving health. This courageous and unapologetic tone of Traore makes his speeches historical and worth researching.

For too long, the IMF has pretended to be a kindly doctor dispensing economic medicine to ailing countries. But what we've learned, what we've endured, is that your medicine can kill the patient. Your loans come with smiles, but they are poisoned darts clothed in contracts. (Traore, 2023)

This statement is poetic and beautifully appropriate metaphors have been used by Traore to explain the role of the IMF in Africa and its devastating effects in the long term scenario. Dependency theory given by Frank and Rodney also resonates with this ideology that these loan policies are only maintained in interest and benefit of core capitalist elites. Traore, with his bold style, shows his audience that the real agenda of foreign aids is not development but it is dominance and exploitation. He states that: "This is not aid. It is domination, not development, exploitation". He also adds:

We no longer accept economic policies that reduce our people to beggars. We no longer dance to the rhythm of conditionalities that gut our public services, our farmers, and force our youth into exile. We no longer accept being told that good governance means handing over our national wealth to foreign firms with smiling consultants. (2023)

4.3. Traore's stance against exploitation of Africa's rich resources by western neocolonial powers

Africa is a country rich in natural resources of gold, oils, cobalt and diamonds but somehow western dominating powers that also control the global discourses make people believe that Africa is an under-developed country which needs foreign aid to survive. Traore rejects these claims of west and uncovers that Africa's natural resources are being stolen, misused and exploited by the hands of these very elites who claim that Africa needs them to survive. These ideas of Traore resemble Nkrumah's concepts of economic arrangements in neocolonial context where imperialist powers control the resources and wealth of developing countries by creating global aid institutions. The co-existence of rich resources and poverty going side by side in Africa is quite ironic, which is caused by external interventions. Frank coined the appropriate term for this exploitation and called it "development of underdevelopment." (Frank, 1966). Traore comments;

You call it development when a foreign company has 90% of a gold mine on our land. You call it progress when your troops patrol cobalt mines but not our children's schools. That is not progress. That is piracy with legal documents. (Traore, 2023)

These neocolonial deals do not do any good to Africa and its progress rather than result into further poverty and underdevelopment (Rodney, 1972). Traore maintains that:

Africa does not owe you. You owe Africa for our gold, our cobalt, our diamonds extracted under colonial boots. You owe us for the minerals that power your smartphones while our villages remain in darkness. You owe us for the diamonds that dazzled your palaces while we bled in silence. (2023)

4.4. Traore's rejection of Foreign guardianship and interventions

Ibrahim Traore clearly opposes the intervention of external forces in internal affairs of Africa as this interference threatens the sovereignty of Africa. In his speeches, he rejects any kind of military, political and economic assistance from western elites. Traore says that Africa does not want a seat on your table where it is not allowed to speak, rather it will create its own table, emphasizing that African countries have the right to choose their partners on the basis of mutual respect and interests. He criticizes western dominated powers who try to control Africa's diplomatic decisions stating that:

We are no longer under your guardianship. We are no longer your junior partners in diplomacy. We are a free people. If a nation chooses partners that respect it rather than exploit it, that is not rebellion. That is wisdom. Let it be known no foreign power will dictate the alliances of Burkina Faso. (Traore, 2023)

Through this speech, he sends a direct message to neo colonial and imperialist powers who set certain norms which they assume everyone should follow. He states in his speeches in a very clear manner that Africa is no longer ready to have master-slave relationships. It needs partners who consider Africa not as subordinate but as an equal ally. Traore maintains that:

We will be sovereign even if it means turning down your loans. Even if it means less growth, but growth that is our own. Africa does not need masters. It needs partners. And if you can't walk with us as equals, then step aside because we are moving forward. (2023)

4.5. Ibrahim Traore's call for African unity and the dream of Pan-Africanism

Ibrahim Traore does not only advocate for the rights of Burkina Faso's citizens but he believes that road to success can only be crossed when African nations are united as one. He advocates highly for the practical application of the theory of Pan-Africanism which was also supported by theorist Nkrumah. Traore urges African nations to unite against neocolonial powers who continue to exploit them. He concludes in his speech about Pan-Africanism that:

Pan-Africanism is not a dream. It is our lifeline. And we will build it stone by stone, heart by heart, with or without your approval.....To the child whose only choice is a stone but who dreams of stars. You are the reason we fight. Do not believe the lie that your continent is cursed. Be proud of your name, your land, your roots. The world may not applaud you now, but the future will speak your name in honor. (Traore, 2023).

Traore also states that unity among African nations like the recently formed alliance among Nigeria, Mali and Burkina Faso feels like a threat to western neo colonial powers: "You fear our unity. Why? because it threatens the myth that Africa can only rise under your supervision" (Traore, 2023). This powerful and straightforward statement given by Traore in international forums shows his strong will of making Burkina Faso and other African nations self-reliant as it is the only cure against dependency and exploitation. He addresses his beloved and resilient African people to remember who they are:

Africa, remember who you are. For we are no longer lost. We are no longer asleep. And so I declare myself as a son of the soil, as a servant of the people. Africa shall rise. Africa shall heal. Not by force, but by the unstoppable power of a people who have remembered their name. (2023)

In his remarkable speeches, Traore strongly condemns the intervention of western powers in Africa which causes economic exploitation, financial dependency and eroded political conditions inside Africa, resulting in the inhibition of development across the

continent. He says that institutions like the IMF are “poisonous arrows” and in the name of "piracy with legal documents," natural rich resources of Africa including gold and cobalt are being stolen from its people and are being used to benefit western elites.

Traore has a new vision for Africa which he states clearly through his speeches as he said: "rising not to kneel, but to stand" urging the African nations to stand for "justice" and "control over our own destinies." Traore asserts that African nations emphasizing his own country Burkina Faso need to attain self-sufficiency in all domains of life whether it is in food production, industrialization, military, education and economic aspects of society. He rejects the current world order where colonial structures still persist and injustices still exist. His speeches are not only complaints and critical overview of today's global politics but his statements are strongly ambitious and purposeful. He appeals to the oppressed and controlled people of Africa to break these chains of slavery and to rebuild, reclaim and restore the African soul which cannot be erased by shallow schemes of foreign capitalists. He paves a new direction for Africa to follow where the country and its resources work in the interest of people, not against them. His strong statement: "The awakening has begun. You are not just living through a revolution. You are the revolution" reflects his strong vision and dream about decolonizing Africa.

5. Conclusion

After conducting deep analysis of Ibrahim Traore's speeches using lens of Nkrumah's neocolonialism and Dependency Theory, this research states that his speeches boldly and fearlessly unveil the hidden power structures of today, extracting the resources of Africa structurally and systematically to keep them poor and dependent. Due to these foreign interventions and loan schemes, neocolonial subordination still exists today even when Africa is politically independent from colonization. Traore's speeches do not guide African nations only but its influence spread across the globe. Every country that has seen the history of colonization and is going through exploitation today by neo colonial practices can learn something valuable from his speeches.

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