
THE CHINESE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE: A NEW PHASE OF NEO-COLONIALISM IN AFRICA AND THE NGUGI'S PROPHECY IN *PETALS OF BLOOD* AND *WIZARD OF THE CROW*

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a critique of the Belt and Road Initiative also known as One Belt One Road Initiative by the Chinese government. It examines this initiative as a new phase of neo-colonialism in Africa and therefore a debt trap on developing nations. It analyses the OBOR initiative using Ngugi wa Thiong'o [1] *Petals of Blood and Wizard of the Crow*. Through these texts, the Belt and Road Initiative which is surreptitiously spreading China's economic exploitation via loan sharking and the unbridled Chinese imperialists are unravelled. This paper adopts the Marxist theory in analysing our chosen texts. The aim is predicated on the fact that the OBOR initiative is a system which exploits developing nations like Africa. The Marxist theory of Marx and Engels as it applies to this paper hinges on how imperialism damages colonial economy and societies. The paper concludes that the Belt and Road Initiative or One Belt One Road (OBOR) Initiative is an indirect mode of colonialism masked in the repressive structure of the Chinese government.

Keywords: *Belt and Road, neo-colonialism, imperialism, colonialism, initiative, OBOR*

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Introduction:

The Belt and Road Initiative also known as One Belt One Road was coined in 2013 by the Chinese government as strategy for connecting with almost 70 countries and international organisations through global infrastructural growth. The One Belt One Road or OBOR initiative was considered pivotal by Xi Jinping [2], the Chinese Communist Party general secretary as part of his foreign policy. The aim and purpose of the OBOR strategy is to foster interregional connectivity and promote economic development.

The Belt and Road Initiative was later promoted by a Chinese politician and an economist Li Keqiang, in his visits to Asia and Europe with the focus on addressing infrastructural gap and fostering economic growth across Asia Pacific area, Africa and central and Eastern Europe. Li Keqiang is presently the premier of the state council of the People's Republic of China.

Incontrovertibly, leaders of most African developing nations have keyed into the Belt and Road Initiative due to the level of poverty prevalent in their countries. According to Zachary Donnenfeld [3] in his article for the Institute for Security Studies on "What is the future of poverty in Africa? He opines, "With more than 150 million people living in severe poverty in only two nations, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the global burden of poverty is highly concentrated in Africa" (2)

This explains why the buttered bread initiative by the Chinese government was well embraced by most African leaders to enable them to have access to the billion dollar infrastructural loans through which they can alleviate the extreme poverty prevalent in their countries.

As juicy as this initiative may appear, concern has been expressed about it being a new phase of neo-colonialism in Africa. It is indeed a debt trap by the Chinese government on developing nations, who may not meet up with the terms and conditions of the initiative after having access to the huge infrastructural loans. The consequence of course is the takeover of those infrastructural facilities by the Chinese government.

Literature Review:

Literature as the mirror of the society is an important agent of change and most African writers who wrote after the Second World War channelled their creative energies towards regenerating their society and to purge it free from colonialism, neo-colonialism or any form of imperialism. One of such writers is Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Ngugi [1] "From the Discussion," argues that "the one basic reality in Africa, not only in South Africa but everywhere is the fact that 80% of the people are living below the breadline standard. This is basic to Nigeria, Kenya, to Uganda, to every other part of Africa" (25)

Ngugi in the quotation above unequivocally highlighted the plight of the masses who live below the breadline standard. No doubt, the suffering of the peasant as precipitated by colonialism, neo-colonialism or imperialism has been a central motif in his writings.

The OBOR Initiative can be examined critically as a new phase of neo-colonialism in Africa as represented by Ngugi wa Thiong'o in his pugnacious criticism of neo-colonialism. According to Chinyelu Florence Ojukwu[4] in her *Perspective on Change: A Study of Selected Writings of Ngugi wa Thiong'o*:

Ngugi's attitude to change is Marxist and materialist, mostly predicated on his protest against the expropriation of the people's land from them by both the white colonial administration and the succeeding administration...This issue of land expropriation has been treated in Ngugi's early work...not at the same depth with which it is treated in *Petals of Blood*... (7-8)

From the assertion of Chinyelu above, one can boldly say that Ngugi's artistic works are resurgence of anti-imperialism and neo-colonialism in which we have situated the Belt and Road Initiative as one. According to Ngugi wa Thiong'o in his "writing Against Neo-colonialism" "By its very character, a neo-colonial dictatorship is an oppressive machine. Its very being increasingly isolates it from the people in its inability to break with the foreign and national systems of exploitation, injustice and oppression (163)

On this note, the OBOR initiative is nothing but a masked repressive structure of exploitation and a national threat to the future generation of any nation which will be caught in its bait of exploitation.

To this end, the chosen novels of our concern, *Petals of Blood* and *Wizard of the Crow* by Ngugi wa Thiong'o [1] in this essay are works of decolonization, national liberation, the restoration of nationhood and national renaissance. According to Kwadwo Osei- Nyame[5], JR, "the resolution to resist imperialism and neo-colonial forms of domination motivates the versions of cultural and political decolonization Fanon proposes and simulates in his works" (128).

The OBOR initiative is indeed, an indirect attempt by the Chinese government to bury the African soul of resistance to neo-colonialism and to institute a new phase of western dominance as substitute to colonialism on the black race. Fanon[6] in *The Wretched of the Earth* aligns to this argument when he defines decolonization as the "replacement of certain species of men by another species of men, without any period of transition, there is a total, complete and absolute substitution" (27)

African leaders who subscribe to the OBOR initiative are nothing but black imperialists which we must be conscious of. To this end, Eustace, Palmer [7] in his assessment of Ngugi's *Petals of Blood* argues that: "...Of all African novels... *Petals of Blood* is likely to provide the most thorough study to date of the evils committed by black imperialists and capitalists in independent African society '(131)

The masses must therefore be awakened to the consciousness that they have long been brainwashed and exploited by these imperialist agents or blacks who took over from the colonial masters after independence. In the words of Chinyelu: 'Ngugi's concern for the deprived masses... dominated his writings. This is mainly because the black intellectuals who took over government from the whites were worse than their white predecessors'" (27)

This essay therefore attempt to protest against the evils of neo-colonialism and imperialism and to create awareness on the new phase of neo-colonialism disguised as Belt and Road initiative- This initiative by the Chinese government and their black collaborators must therefore be stopped and condemned in toto.

Also, in *Wizard of the Crow* by Ngugi wa Thiong'o[1], he represented Africa's political idiosyncrasies as neo-colonialistic and corrupt. As a novel of decolonization, Gurnah states:

Ngugi's novel is dependent on fairly rigid sustained stereotypes such as heathen African and heartless European and by particularising (sic) the pasts, Ngugi is able to undertake transformative strategies for redeeming his nation from the oppression of neo-colonialism (48)

Ngugi's predominant concern has therefore been on transforming Africa and redeeming it from the snare of neo-colonialism as represented by the OBOR initiative today. In his critique on the evil of this new phase of neo-colonialism, Chijioke Uwasomba[8] opines:

To sustain and promote their interests to the disadvantaged Africa, the international hegemonic have ensured that their agents remain in power to do their biddings. Even on the verge of economic collapse triggered by "imaginary debts" allegedly owed to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB) and other western banks and financial institutions, these agents recognize and follow policies that satisfy their interests and those of their colonial masters (95)

The assertion of Chijioke above captures the perpetual and pitiable condition Africa has been subjected to through policies made by the imperialist agents for their selfish interest and to satisfy the interest of their imperialist masters. The incorporation of Africa economies into the international capitalist trajectory like the Belt and Road Initiative,

International Monetary Fund etc and the debts owed to them has drastically collapsed the African economy. On the imperialist domination of Africa, Amilcar Cabral opines that:

Whether imperialist or not, the ideal for foreign conquest lies in this alternative: either to remove virtually all the population of the dominated country, thus excluding the possibility of cultural resistance; or to succeed in enforcing itself without harm to the culture of the dominated people, that is, to harmonize the economic and political supremacy of the dominated people with their own culture (486).

However, Fanon locates the alienation of the people as emanating from the colonialists desire to exploit and maintain their lordship over the colonized. He observes that colonialism has “hammered into the native’s mind the idea of a society of individuals where each person shuts himself up in his own subjectivity, and whose only wealth is individual thought” (36). Nkrumah further observed:

It is no longer possible, as it was in the last century, to reverse the process once a region has become nominally independent. Existing colonies may linger on but there will be no new colonies formed. We have neo-colonialism today in place of colonialism as the core weapon of imperialism (189).

The Chinese therefore engaged African people with an unbridled exploitative mechanism under the guise of the OBOR initiative which is akin to neo-colonialism. Nkrumah further opines, “The essence of neo-colonialism is that, in principle, the state that is subject to it is autonomous and has all the outwardappings of foreign sovereignty. In reality its economic structure and therefore its political policy is actually directed from outside” (179).

The assertion of Nkrumah above shows that China’s Belt and Road Initiative engagement with African nations is seen as nothing but a mere second phase of neo-colonialism which is aimed at milking African’s resources. This paper therefore sees the astronomical dependence of African economy on the Chinese government Belt and Road Initiatives as nothing but an irrational imperialist and colonialist logic to perpetually create dependency complex on Africa and to have indirect control over the black race.

Theoretical Framework

Marxism comes from the works of Karl Marx[9] and Friedrich Engels, both of whom published a highly influential text, *Communism Manifesto* (1848), in which the dominant force of the economic system is emphasized as the forming and structuring of human societies. According to Tyson Lois[10], "For Marxism, the motive behind all social and political practices, including education, philosophy, religion, government, the arts, science, technology, the media, and so on, is to gain and retain economic influence." (55) In other words, other spheres of human effort are determined and motivated by economic incentives. Economics is the basis for using Marxist terminology, while politics and other social practices is the superstructure on which the foundation relies and is constructed.

In addition, economic conditions are classified as material circumstances, while the historical situation is called the social / political / ideological atmosphere created by material conditions. The basic material / historical conditions under which certain events and productions occur needs to be known in order to achieve proper understanding of human events and human development [10].

In Marxist theory, society is broadly divided on the socio-economic continuum into the bourgeoisie and the proletariat; and by (undesirable) ideology, the proletariat is influenced and regulated by the bourgeoisie. Notably, the bourgeoisie uses undesirable philosophies to advance a repressive political agenda and, in order to ensure citizens' acceptance, pass these agendas off as natural ways of seeing the world [11]. Colonialism, neo-colonialism, and racism are some of such philosophies, as expressed by Ngugi wa Thiong'o[1] in *Petals of Blood* and *Wizard of the Crow*, where a particular group of people, the white colonialists, attempt to conquer another group, the Africans, by stressing their own 'normal' dominance through the OBOR initiative.

***Petals of Blood* as a Foreshadowing of Loan and Neo-Colonialism in Neo-Colonialist States in Africa**

Ngugi’s *Petals of Blood* is one of the novels that portray Ngugi’s fighting spirit against colonialism and neo-colonialism in Africa. Of course, it is a well known fact that both colonialism and neo-colonialism are geared towards economic enrichment of the colonising foreign power(s). The present country that is indirectly neo-colonising Africa is China via its Belt and Road Initiative which is surreptitiously spreading China’s economic exploitation via loan sharking.

Ngugi prophetically asserts in *Petals* that loans with outrageous interests will be the next phase of exploiting Africans by foreign countries in collaboration with Africans. The reference to *Petals* as a prophetic text becomes applicable here when viewed from the background that Ngugi was farseeing enough to have touched on the subject of loan-neo-colonialism in the year 1977 before China keys into it fully in 2013 targeting mainly countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. This idea of loan- neo-colonialism also features in his play *I Will Marry When I Want*. The way the

fictional characters raise their voices against the traps the ruling elites lure them into is also the same way China's loans have attracted uproars from citizens. This has generated heated debates in parliaments of countries that have fallen victim to the neo-colonial loan bail. Like all worthwhile prophesies, it takes Ngugi's prophesy an interval of thirty six years to fiercely manifest in Africa Therefore the neo colonialism? The characters this paper examines from the texts shall provide the answers

The brutal manifestation of the Chinese type of loan-neo-colonialism is the opposite of the subtle style of the International Monetary Fund-IMF. It is worthy o note that the way most of these foreign loans are taken by the ruling class in Africa for alleged "development purposes" leave much to be desired. This is because there are no debates or public hearing in parliament as to the long term effect of these loans on the countries and its citizens. The truth is that most of these loans are actually taken to mortgage the countries future, service the personal extravagant life style of the ruling elite and mortgage the future of the ordinary citizens. For the preceding reason, this paper focuses on minor characters'/peasants' /proletariats' ability to work out their own economic freedom in the selected texts despite the seemingly hopeless situation the ruling class has thrown them into. This is in line with the admonition of Xi Jinping, the general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party and the de facto president of China who says: "To eliminate poverty, the impoverished should rely on their hard work" (jimping 91)

In *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedom*, Ngugi rightly notes that: neo-colonialism replaced direct imperial colonialism of which the new African elites inherited the structure to continue oppressing and exploiting their fellow Africans (51-52). It is an open secret that Africans protested and even fought the forces of direct colonial human exploitation in some parts of Africa and mainly in Ngugi's own Kenya in the form of the Mau Mau Uprising and the Maji Maji Rebellion in Tanzania amongst others. However, these mass protests and uprisings are often suppressed with oppressive state apparatuses such as the army and the police, where ideological ones have failed- the media, schools and religion etc. A specific brutal classic example is the shooting and killing of twenty one striking miners by the British colonial Government on the 18th Nov. 1949 in Enugu, the present day capital of Enugu State in South –Eastern Nigeria. What was these miners offence? They were fighting against exploitation by way of back-pay owed them for a period of casualisation. This concept of labour casualisation and later lay-off of workers still effectively exists in Nigeria and most part of Africa. This is done mostly by Chinese and Indian companies amongst others. A second example is the shooting and killing of one hundred and fifty workers in 14th March, 1922 in Nairobi, Kenya who protested and demanded for the release of Harry Thuku. The above examples and other relevant ones shows that mass protest does not guarantee lasting social change in the African soil as the form of exploitation only changes form or is short-lived, mostly when the protests are against Africans who inherited the oppressive structure. Thus mass protest for social change with the existence of OSA (Oppressive State Apparatus) and ISA (Ideological State Apparatus) becomes dangerous. As William Shakespeare rightly points out In *Henry IV Part 1* "The better part of valor is discretion: in which better part I have saved my life." Ngugi also makes the same statement in *Petals* thus: "He [Abdulla] was a worker at a shoe-factory near his home, where strike after strike for higher wages and better housing had always been broken by helmeted policemen "(136). An African proverb also says, "He whose head is used to split a coconut will not partake in the eating" So, it becomes pertinent to ask, why should a reformer die trying to reform? That will be quite irrational. The reformer needs to be alive to enjoy the fruit of the reform/s. Hence, individuals need to key into the prevailing system to change things for a better economic life which has become inevitable and therefore necessary

Loan- Neo-Colonialism, Exploitation and Economic Freedom in *Petals*

Petals of Blood with its complex narrative pattern opens with an un-linear pattern of; the denouement, the situation, complication and finally the resolution via flashback. It is a clear cut difference from Ngugi's two early novels; *The River Between* (1965) and *Weep Not, Child* (1964). Ngugi noted that it took him six years to write *Petals*. But it took him one and two years respectively to write the previous two which reflect in their simple plot pattern. On the first page of *Petals* we are introduced into the investigation that seeks to unknot the murder of two capitalists and one educationist turned capitalist viz: Chui, Kimeria and Mzigo. Two police constables knock on the door of Munira and ask "Are you Mr Munira?" (2), this would have come in the last sentence of the second paragraph of page (332-3), but we leave that for style, a very impressive one for that matter.

By the end of the book we come to know that Munira is actually the murderer. Munira gets the impetus for the crime through his new found source of solace: religious puritanism. However, there is a deep seated psychological disorder in him which borders on split personality. Munira, one of the members of the oppressed working class but a successful petty school teacher only uses religion as a succour to make up for his various frustrations caused by his inability to withstand the prevailing neo-colonialism and his emotional failure to win Wanja's love back from Karega(521) and later Abdulla (310,328). Regarding Munira's emotion towards Wanja, the text states:" He [Munira] was racking his brains for ways and means of endearing himself to her [Wanja] when the idea struck him" (273). Munira takes the first individual Marxist move for a change against his former boss [Mzigo] and the two others who represent the exploitative class in the novel.

However, the plan to change the status quo by murdering the three characters who are the exploiters of the peasant and the working class is Wanja's brainchild, because she is unarguably the most exploited in the text. She invites them to meet her in her brothel to enable her introduce the physically challenged Abdulla as the man she decides to settle down with and quit prostitution for good. After which she will take her revenge on the men who exploit her and send her back to the life of prostitution she is working hard to get away from (311). And she vows never to go back to that life, a determined resolution for change which all humans need to make. The text refers thus:

She could not return to her previous state of innocence. But she could do something about her present circumstance. [...] For a start she could end her relationship with Kimeria. Yes. She must end it. But this second time it will be on her terms. [...] She would have her vengeance. She did not see any contradiction in her choice of Abdulla as her instrument of vengeance. It seemed only natural now that she had accepted him into her life. (328)

But one rather interesting thing about Kimeria's fate is that, even Abdulla is desirous of killing him for betraying Nding'uri (311). Same as Wanja decides earlier to kill him when he takes advantage of her for the second time consequent upon Joseph's sickness on their way to see Hon. Nderi wa Riera, MP for Ilmorog and Southern Ruwa-ini. The text refers that Wanja soliloquises thus: "He must die, a voice thudded within, he must die. It was simple. It was bitterly sweet. It restored her calm and peace" (157)

With the arrival of modernity in old Ilmorog that makes it New Ilmorog (which metaphorically means the new independent African countries), and the emergence of a new progressive lives for the exploited peasants, the same forces of colonial exploitation now dressed in modern robe and personified in the trio of Chui, Kimeria and Mzigo come to Ilmorog with their foreign compradors bourgeois as China is currently doing in Africa. They come with the idea of bank loan with exorbitant interest rate for the peasant and lured the peasants to use their farm lands as collaterals. As expected, the peasants could not payback the loans by their labour, consequently the banks auction the farm the lands. Which the neo-colonialist forces turn back to buy and build industries on the same land. Mzigo is the one that buys Abdulla's and Wanja's building. Leading to it is the specifically tragic case of Wanja's grandmother; Nyakinyua. When her labour cannot service the loan, the company KANUA KANENE & CO Valuers & Surveyors, Auctioneers comes in to sell off the old woman's land to recover the loan money (275). With hindsight, the company represents China in this paper and the fate of Nyakinyua represents what is in for African countries that run after China's loans in the guise of Belt and Road Initiative. When one rhetorically asks, why must china embark on developing Africa? Is the entire China developed? The answer is certainly no. Hence the Initiative becomes reminiscent of what the Europeans gave as a reason for the Trans-Atlantic-Slave Trade and later colonialism of Africans: Civilisation, Christianity and Commerce.

As in line with this paper's central argument that, even in the most vicious neo-colonial state, the individual who does not submit to the fate of neo-colonialism will always key into the prevailing circumstance and makes his or her own economic breakthrough. This is personified in Wanja and Abdulla. Wanja's deep seated hatred for the forces of exploitation and neo-colonialism pushes her forward in life. These exploitative forces first take a toll on her school when Kimeria takes an early advantage of her innocent youth to seduce her and makes her pregnant and she drops out of school. This is manifest when she reflects on the turn her life takes thus: "She again thought about her life, wondering if it would have been different without her early encounter with Kimeria" (329). Prior to the above Wanja confirms Kimeria's violation of her: [...] "Who? What are you talking about?" asked 'Karega. He is the one who seduced me away from home,' she [Wanja] said. 'He called himself: Hawkins Kimeria' "(256).

Despite the above, Wanja goes to Nairobi and after sometimes as a barmaid with a lot of vicissitudes and difficulties is able to tough it out and returns to Ilmorog where she starts a bar business with Abdulla. She uses her ingenuity to revive Abdulla's local bar from which they grow from success to success. Later she becomes powerful and influential via her Theng'eta brewing skill. Ngugi captures Wanja's triumph over neo-colonialism as: "She [Wanja] was seized by the devil spirit of brewing and selling and counting and hatching out more plans for the progress of her trade /business partnership with Abdulla . [...] Wanja presided over all this: she had money and she was powerful and men and women feared her. (269-270). In the height of Wanja's economic success, she and Abdulla own a building that is to serve as a shopping mall. But when the bank comes for the recovery of the loan her grandmother takes, she has to sell her share of the complex to Abdulla. He too, not having enough money to buy the entire building, has to contact Mzigo who buys the building (277). Wanja uses the proceeds to redeem her grandmother's land to avoid public shame (276). Before her plan to kill her exploiters could be carried out by herself, Munira strikes on a fateful Saturday evening on the pretext that Wanja's brothel mocks god's work on earth, injuring her in the process (333). This emphasis here is the fact that the individual is the sole agent of change in any system, including neo-colonialism in a neo-colonialist state as personified by the duo Abdulla and Wanja.

The Proletariat and Economic Freedom in a Neo-Colonial State in *Wizard of the Crow*

Ngugi's *Wizard of the Crow* was originally written in Gikuyu as *Murogi wa Kagogo* and translated into English by the author. It is the most voluminous of Ngugi's novels, running into 766 pages. It was written during the author's years in exile consequent upon his release from the Kamiti Maximum Security Prison the Kenyatta government threw him into without trial. Commenting on the novel, Ngugi notes that "*Wizard of the Crow* is the only novel in history written between two oranges. This is because I began to write in Orange, New Jersey and completed it in Orange County, California" Dyssou [12]. The novel is the culmination of Ngugi's sustained effort to fight neo-colonialism via foreign loans to African countries for frivolous reasons, thereby perpetually enslaving African countries. But Ngugi makes an ironic turn as he makes the Global Bank to turn down the loan application. Maybe it is a plea that such should be the case when the reasons for a loan are frivolous as is mostly the case. The plot is a comparatively simple one, but like *Petals*, it begins with its denouement.

The text opens in the ironic Free Republic of Aburiria with the Ruler's sickness. Towards the end of the text it is known that his failure to secure the loan causes the sickness. The Aburirians speculate five theories as the possible causes of the Ruler's sickness.

The Ruler's obsession to obtain the loan from the GB for a funny project of Marching to Heaven comes at the heels of the sycophantic prompting of his three ministers viz: Benjamin Mambo, minister for information, Markus Machokali, minister for foreign affairs, and Silver Sikioku, minister of state in the Ruler's office. The Ruler himself rises to power through sycophancy (230-231). These three ministers represent the class of African politicians who see nothing wrong in any action of a ruler as long as their breads are buttered.

The Ruler's action of wanting to take a loan that will serve no public good is typical of the way and manner African leaders take loans from international monetary organisations to embark on projects of self-aggrandisement. Thus the citizens' future is mortgaged. But the artistic merit in *WOC* is that Ngugi makes the GB to reject the loan application in just ten lines thus:

The letter was about ten lines. After reviewing the entire project, the Global Bank did not see any economic benefits to Marching to Heaven. To argue that the project would create jobs, as the Aburirian government had claimed, was a case of outdated Keynesian economics. Neither old-fashioned nor neo-Keynesianism had any place in the modern global economy. The Global Bank cannot release funds *on the basis of the current representation*. If Aburiria wanted to pursue the matter further, it would have to make a better case. (485, emphasis in original)

In the above excerpt, attention needs to be drawn to the sentence that, "the Global Bank did not see any economic benefit [...]" implies that no loan is ever given to any African country without a hidden agenda to exploit and siphon Africans resources. The second attention is that; "Neither old-fashioned nor neo-Keynesianism had any place in modern global economy." Then the question is, what does? The best answer is; Scientific Know-How which creates the modern concept of demand. This preceding answer is in keeping with the Oxford Dictionary of Economics[13] which explains Keynesian Economics as that which is based on the ideas of John Maynard Keynes which asserts:

[...] that aggregate demand is the driving force in the economy; [...] government can boost economic activity by increasing its spending, thereby inducing private consumption and investment. In general, the theory has been criticized and replaced by a more pragmatic view of the supply side of the economy and the use of the *interest rate as the major policy tool*. (Emphasis added)

Thus, until African countries have a scientific know-how or that which dictates the supply side, neo-colonialism has come to stay. But, the individual who is the central causative agent of change ought to and will always triumph as this paper as shown in the cases of Abdullah and Wanja in *Petals*. This we will see again in two minor characters aside Nyawira who leads an underground movement of "Movement of the Voice of the People" to fight against the building of Marching to Heaven and her later collaborator, Kimati. Two minor characters are chosen to give this section the needed focus because the text is full of numerous characters. And one other reason for analysing the rise of minor or proletariat characters is due to the fact that, as in real life, neo-colonialism in the form of National Loans adversely affects the ordinary people more. This is in line with the shouting of the beggars Nyawira leads; "Marching to Heaven is Marching to Hell. Your strings of Loans Are Chains of Slavery. Your Loans are the cause of Begging. We beggars Beg the End of Begging" (74). However, despite the masses /peasants wailing cum protest about loans and slavery, certain characters key into the prevailing neo-colonialism and better themselves. Example of such is John Kaniuru.

John Kaniuru has the ambition to achieve his own economic freedom and salvation, being the son of poor parents. His ambition results in his first marriage to Nyawira with the intention of gaining financial freedom through the marriage. He could not convince Nyawira to get him money from her father, coupled with Nyawira's Marxist view, hence the marriage collapses. He later joins the youth wing of the Ruler's party and rises to the top. His meteoric rise is characterized by several phases. First, he becomes the vice chairman of marching to Heaven Committee (259) and later

the chairman of the commission of enquiry into the queue that takes place in front of Tajirika's office (260). John Kaniuru life is another classical case of the individual's ability and will to transcend neo-colonialism and its oppressive force by one's development of one's innate ability first. John Kaniuru is the person who sketches the first image of Marching to Heaven. While blackmailing John Kaniuru into marrying her, his former accomplice in the bank, Jane Kanyori notes that: "I remember you telling me that he[Machokali] once tried to thwart your rise to the top by refusing to say you sketched the first images of Marching to Heaven" (712). Page (755) confirms John as an accomplished artist. A glimpse of John's euphoria in success and desire to show off is below:

An idea struck him. Why not take his enjoyment to a higher level? Why not pay a visit to Nyawira's father, Mathew Wangahu, the man who thought he, Kaniuru, was too poor for the hand of his daughter? [...] When Wangahu saw a sleek automobile stop outside his house with what he took to be a cabinet minister inside, he rushed to meet him. The chauffeur came out and opened the backdoor and saluted. Wangahu almost collapsed when he saw Kaniuru emerge, but, well schooled in decorum, he did not display undue surprise. (285)

Secondly, John rises to become the minister of defence (710) and later governor of the central bank of Aburiria. Unlike Nyawira, he does not seek to change the status quo that has come to stay, but changes himself and keys into the prevailing system after quitting his job as a lecturer in Aburiria Polytechnic. And of course, if the individual is a better person, the society automatically becomes better.

Another minor character that transcends neo-colonialism in a neo-colonialist state is Jane Kanyori. Rather than bemoans and protests against the government move to secure a meaningless loan as Nyawira and her underground movement does, she cashes in on the prevailing situation. As John Kaniuru's opens a fake bank account in the name of Silver Sikioku in which he pays in kickbacks of the monies he gets from potential favour seekers in his capacity as the vice chairman of Marching to Heaven project and chairman of the committee of enquiry into queue mania (536). She is the female counterpart of John Kaniuru in the dog eat dog business of capitalism in the free republic of Aburiria. She blackmails John Kaniuru into marrying her after telling him that she keeps copies of the signatures of: Silver Sikioku, the Ruler and Tajirika that John forges. She also accuses John of an involvement in the murder of Tajirika which is euphemistically called SID- Self Induced Disappearance (712). Her dexterity to out fox John Kaniuru comes to the peak when she arrives his house with her boxes in the evening and rails out to John how she loves him and wants to be his wife. She goes ahead to explain the superstitious means she uses to arrive at her decision (710). The almighty John Kaniuru, the fox of the novel being faced with out-foxing, expresses his shock thus: "Are you crazy? Ondoka. Get Out" [H]e yelled, threatening to call the police"(711). On the whole, these characters examined here key into the prevailing conditions of a neo-colonial state and its neo-colonial regime which Ngugi describes as: "By its very character, a neo-colonial dictatorship is an oppressive machine. Its very being increasingly isolates it from the people in its inability to break with the foreign and national systems of exploitation, injustice and oppression [...] (71)." to gain their own economic freedom. Their moves are justified against the background that one needs to stoop to conquer. This situation is possible in all African countries in which neo-colonialism has come to stay, mostly in the face of consistent failure of mass protest. There must be an individual self-revolution. There is hope for a positive change for the individual, hence the society.

Conclusion:

Our discourse so far is fashioned towards exposing the new phase of colonialism in Africa via the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. Breaking free from neo-colonialism is essential in fostering rapid development in African continents. This paper therefore concludes that the Marxist revolutionary praxis and ethos remains the only way African continents could attain economic freedom in a neo-colonialist state. However, this revolution is not the mass protests which are often brutally suppressed with the repressive state apparatus but through the individual self revolution. By this, individuals can attain personal economic freedom and hence the society as the fictional characters in our chosen texts did.

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