



FROM COLONIAL EXTRACTION TO DIGITAL CAPITALISM: THE EVOLUTION OF THE WORLD ECONOMIC ORDER AND THE FUTURE OF DEVELOPING NATIONS

Adeyemi Aderombi

Lecturer in Business and Management, Icon College of Technology and Management.

Cite this article:

Adeyemi Aderombi (2026),
From Colonial Extraction to
Digital Capitalism: The
Evolution of the World
Economic Order and the
Future of Developing Nations.
African Journal of Economics
and Sustainable Development
9(4), 19-42. DOI:
10.52589/AJESD-I31Q2VL0

Manuscript History

Received: 25 Jun 2026

Accepted: 23 Jul 2026

Published: 1 Aug 2026

Copyright © 2026 The Author(s).

This is an Open Access article
distributed under the terms of
Creative Commons Attribution-
NonCommercial-NoDerivatives
4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND
4.0), which permits anyone to
share, use, reproduce and
redistribute in any medium,
provided the original author and
source are credited.

ABSTRACT: *This research explores the evolution of the global economic order from the era of colonization through resource extraction to digital capitalism and its impacts on developing countries. It is posited that even though the means by which global economic dominance has been exercised have changed from territorial occupation and resource extraction to financial dependence, data commodification, and artificial intelligence (AI) based governance, the structural inequalities underlying the global economic system have remained largely the same. A qualitative research methodology is used where the design of the study is historical and interpretive political economy. Data used in this research is purely secondary and comes from academic sources, historical documents, and reports from international organizations on the changes in global capitalism throughout various historical eras. The results show that modern-day digital capitalism has replicated many characteristics of past colonial and neo-colonial systems by virtue of digital infrastructure being concentrated in a few technologically advanced countries. Therefore, many developing countries are still prone to technological dependency in spite of their political independence.*

KEYWORDS: Colonial extraction; Digital capitalism; Artificial intelligence; Global economic order; Developing nations.



INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Throughout the history of globalization, global economic structures have evolved through interconnected networks of power, production, and resource extraction within the context of relations between industrialized and developing countries. While the mercantile expansion of European imperial powers marked the dawn of globalization in the fifteenth century, the advent of digital capitalism driven by artificial intelligence (AI) technology marks a new era of globalization and has transformed the means through which wealth is generated and maintained within the current system of global economic dominance. While formal imperialism has waned since the middle of the twentieth century, many theorists point out that the structures that underlie global economic imperialism have continued evolving along with the dynamics of changing economic and technological landscapes (Rodney, 1972; Nkrumah, 1965; Wallerstein, 1974). This long process of creating the global economic system can be described as having a history that starts from colonial extraction, which comes together with the emergence of industrial capitalism. Following the period of neoliberal globalization and the evolution of digital capitalism, there is a trend toward incorporating artificial intelligence into the processes of global governance and economic administration. Recent evidence also suggest that technology is being increasingly used to influence global economic governance, digitalization and development policies, but at the same time, it has brought up issues of technological inequalities between developed and developing countries (UNCTAD, 2025).

Colonialism was crucial to the establishment of the modern capitalist economy. The imperial nations of Europe gained wealth by exploiting the colonized nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America for their natural resources, exploiting cheap labor, engaging in unfair trade practices, and extracting wealth from colonized lands. In his work titled “How Europe Underdeveloped Africa,” Walter Rodney posits that colonialism resulted in the restructuring of African economies along the lines of European industries while denying self-development to colonized societies. Similarly, in *Capitalism and Slavery*, Eric Williams argues that the wealth derived from slavery and colonial exploitation provided the financial foundation for the industrialization of European nations (Williams, 1944).

The emergence and expansion of industrial capitalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries further widened these disparities. European nations industrialized due to the rise in manufacturing, increased trade activities, and imperial control of political institutions. Colonies provided natural resources as well as markets for manufactured products made in more advanced countries.

Uneven integration led to the retardation of industrialization in colonized areas and facilitated the process of growth in Europe and North America, thus reinforcing global economic hierarchy.

After attaining independence in the twentieth century, many sovereign countries had the expectation of economic liberation and development. In reality, however, the post-colonial period marked the rise of new economic relations that created conditions for the continued dependence of developing countries on their counterparts. According to Kwame Nkrumah, political independence without economic independence means that colonially ruled countries have changed from being colonially controlled to foreign-controlled. The rise of multi-national



corporations, the effects of Bretton Woods institutions, Structural Adjustment Programs, and neoliberal economic policy all ensured that developing countries were integrated into the global economy controlled by industrial countries. Dependency theorists like Andre Gunder Frank and Samir Amin thus argued that underdevelopment was structurally built in the global capitalist economy.

Within the last few decades, globalization has witnessed an age marked by digital technology and its impact. Globalization has been influenced by multinational corporations of technology such as Google, Meta, Amazon, and Microsoft, which have made the collection of data one of the most important resources in the globalized world today. Unlike previous methods of exploitation through mineral extraction, agricultural products, and industrial labor, digital capitalism relies heavily on exploiting the data from human actions within the digital world. According to Shoshana Zuboff, this is what she calls “surveillance capitalism” where the use of data for the sake of economic gain has become the major means of corporate power. Michael Kwet, Nick Couldry, and Ulises Mejias are some of the scholars who point out the link between digital capitalism and colonial modes of exploitation in that developing countries continue to be used as sources of data and digital labor.

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has raised even more concerns about the problems of technological inequality and digital dependence. As mentioned above, AI is becoming increasingly important for financial markets, labor relations, surveillance, governance, and geopolitics. Yet, the development of sophisticated AI tools is still confined to relatively few technologically powerful states and companies that own data infrastructure, manufacture semiconductors, provide cloud computing services, and develop algorithms. Such a situation can pose a threat to the already existing inequalities between the countries of the Global North and those of the Global South, especially when it comes to poorly digitized countries that lack technology-related investments.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature on colonialism, dependency theory, neoliberal globalization, digital capitalism, and artificial intelligence. Section 3 presents the theoretical framework, while Section 4 outlines the research methodology. Sections 5 to 7 discuss the historical evolution of the world economic order from colonial extraction to digital capitalism and AI-driven governance. Finally, Section 8 concludes the study by highlighting its key findings, policy implications, and recommendations for future research.

Statement of the Problem

Although being free and part of the world economy, many developing nations continue to be plagued by structural disparities, dependence, and a lack of control over vital systems of production, finance, and technology. Although the days of colonialism as a political practice may be behind many developing nations, the nature of their relationship with other more advanced nations in the context of the international economic order has often led to inequity in a way that raises very important questions about whether the current world economic order represents a decisive departure from history or rather its continuation.

Indeed, the emergence of neoliberal globalization at the close of the twentieth century through international financial institutions, multinational corporations, and liberal trade regimes has come to shed considerable light on this matter. Although globalization did offer some gains for



economic development and technological progress in some parts of the world, they did so in an environment wherein more advanced nations had dominated financial capital, manufacturing industries, and technology.

Consequently, poor economies were unable to escape their colonial-era tradition of economic dependency in international economic relations. As such, the advent of digital capitalism and artificial intelligence in the past few decades has further fueled inequality and dependency. The sources of modern economic power are increasingly multinationals involved in the digital economy, including technology companies like Google, Meta, Amazon, and Microsoft. Multinational companies are at the heart of the dominance of digital infrastructures, cloud computing, platforms, data economy, and AI innovation. The increasing importance of data in the modern economy has resulted in fears around issues like surveillance capitalism, digital monopolies, technological imperialism, and inequalities in AI capability across the world. Many poor economies do not possess the necessary infrastructure, expertise, and institutions to compete in the digital economy based on artificial intelligence, leading to their potential technological dependency as consumers and not innovators.

There are many studies analyzing colonialism, dependency theory, neoliberal globalization, digital capitalism, and AI governance separately. Research on colonialism and dependency does not typically connect to the issue of digital capitalism, while the topic of artificial intelligence rarely connects its discussion with colonial history. In other words, there is an absence of scholarship combining colonialism, digital capitalism, and AI innovation. Thus, the goal of this paper is to examine the historical evolution of global capitalism from colonial extraction to digital capitalism and AI innovation. The argument is that while colonial forms of dominance through resource extraction and territorial expansion have been replaced by financial dependency, data commodification, and algorithmic manipulation, the underlying inequalities in the global economic order persist to this day.

Consequently, this study seeks to analyze the historical evolution of global capitalism, from its colonial stage to the current digital capitalism and AI governance era. The study posits that, while the process of dominance has changed from territorial conquest and exploitation to financial dependence, data commoditization, and algorithmic power, structural inequities in the global economic system still prevail. As such, an understanding of the future trajectory of developing countries cannot be achieved without a historical and interdisciplinary inquiry into the legacies of colonialism in our current systems of power.

Research Questions

1. How did colonial extraction shape the modern world economic order?
2. How has neoliberal globalization transformed systems of dependency between developed and developing nations?
3. Does digital capitalism reproduce colonial patterns of extraction and unequal exchange?
4. What are the implications of AI-driven capitalism for developing nations?



Aim and Objectives

Aim

To examine the evolution of the world economic order from colonial extraction to digital capitalism and its implications for developing nations.

Objectives

1. To examine the colonial foundations of global capitalism and economic inequality.
2. To analyze the relationship between dependency, neoliberal globalization, and global economic power.
3. To investigate the rise of digital capitalism, data commodification, and AI-driven inequality.
4. To assess the implications of technological dependency and artificial intelligence for developing nations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The evolution of the world economic order has attracted extensive scholarly attention across disciplines such as International Political Economy, Development Studies, postcolonial studies, and digital economics. Existing literature examines how colonial expansion, industrial capitalism, neoliberal globalization, and digital technologies have shaped global patterns of wealth accumulation and inequality. Earlier scholarship focused primarily on colonial extraction, imperial dominance, and dependency relations between advanced and developing economies, whereas more recent studies increasingly explore digital capitalism, platform monopolies, data commodification, algorithmic governance, and the implications of artificial intelligence for digital colonialism and technological dependency in developing countries (Salami, 2024). Although the mechanisms of global dominance have evolved over time, many scholars argue that structural inequalities between the Global North and Global South remain deeply embedded within the international economic system. Consequently, contemporary debates surrounding digital colonialism, artificial intelligence, and technological sovereignty increasingly connect historical systems of colonial extraction to modern forms of digital and algorithmic control. This literature review critically examines these debates by tracing the intellectual evolution of scholarship from colonial political economy to contemporary analyses of digital capitalism and AI-driven inequality. In order to create a systematic framework for analysis, the review traces the development of global capitalism through history, starting from its colonial political economy to the period of dependency theory, neoliberal globalization, digital capitalism, and artificial intelligence.

Colonialism and the Foundations of Global Capitalism

The roots of today's world economic system are very much tied to the colonization period between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, when European nations pursued colonial



expansion alongside capitalist accumulation. Rather than being solely a political venture of territorial conquest, colonialism was an economic enterprise based on mercantilism, slave labour, resource extraction, and exploitative trading relations. Through plantation economies, colonial expansion, and the transatlantic slave trade, European powers accumulated enormous wealth, which in turn facilitated industrialization and reinforced the emergence of global inequality through capitalism. Recent scholarship has further linked these historical patterns of extraction to contemporary debates on digital colonialism and technological dependency, demonstrating the continued relevance of colonial political economy in understanding present-day global inequalities (Salami, 2024).

Scholars such as Walter Rodney, Eric Williams, and Karl Marx regarded colonialism as a vital component of capitalist development rather than merely a consequence of it. In *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Rodney (1972) argues that African economies were deliberately restructured to serve European industrial needs while simultaneously undermining indigenous production systems and economic self-sufficiency. Similarly, Williams (1944), in *Capitalism and Slavery*, contends that profits generated from the transatlantic slave trade and plantation economies provided the financial foundation for Britain's industrialization. Marx further developed these ideas through the concept of *primitive accumulation*, arguing that capitalism emerged through violent dispossession and colonial exploitation, concentrating wealth in Europe while impoverishing colonized societies. Although Rodney (1972), Williams (1944), and Marx approached colonialism from different theoretical perspectives, they converge in arguing that colonial extraction was fundamental to capitalist development, thereby challenging Eurocentric explanations that attribute European industrialization primarily to domestic innovation and entrepreneurial activity.

Building on these criticisms, postcolonial scholars examined the political, cultural, and psychological dimensions of colonial domination. Frantz Fanon argued that colonial regimes were founded on racism, violence, and dehumanization, which legitimized both economic exploitation and the domination of colonized peoples. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon (1961) maintained that colonialism created enduring structural relationships of dependence that persisted even after political independence. His work has remained highly influential among anti-colonial movements and scholars of postcolonial political economy.

While most critical scholars agree that colonial rule was fundamentally exploitative, there is disagreement regarding its developmental consequences. Modernization theorists such as Walt Rostow argued that integration into the global economy and the adoption of modern institutions could eventually promote economic development in former colonies. In contrast, dependency and postcolonial scholars maintain that colonialism created structural inequalities and extractive economic systems that continue to shape contemporary global economic relations.

Dependency Theory and World-Systems Analysis

Dependency theory and world-systems analysis emerged during the mid-twentieth century as major critiques of modernization theory and conventional explanations of economic development. Rather than interpreting underdevelopment as a temporary stage on the path toward modernization, dependency theorists argued that global capitalism itself generated and sustained structural inequalities between industrialized and peripheral economies. Thus, these theories provided an important intellectual framework for understanding why patterns of exploitation persisted despite formal decolonization. Recent scholarship has extended these



perspectives by examining how digital technologies and artificial intelligence have reshaped, rather than eliminated, global dependency relationships (Salami, 2024).

Andre Gunder Frank is one of the key pioneers of dependency theory. He maintained that underdevelopment was produced as part of the expansion of global capitalism. In *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*, Frank (1967) contended that developing nations were incorporated into the global economy in subordinate positions designed to benefit industrialized states. Wealth flowed from peripheral regions to metropolitan centres through unequal trade relations and economic dependency, thereby limiting autonomous development within the Global South. Similarly, Samir Amin argued that capitalism generated systems of "unequal exchange" that favoured advanced economies while restricting industrial diversification and technological development in peripheral regions. Although Frank (1967) and Amin approached dependency from different analytical perspectives, both argued that global capitalism systematically reproduced asymmetrical economic relations that constrained the economic development of peripheral societies.

The above discussion was further developed through Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems theory. Wallerstein (1974) viewed the global economy as a hierarchical system consisting of core, semi-periphery, and periphery states, in which core economies controlled manufacturing, finance, and technological innovation, while peripheral economies supplied raw materials and cheap labour. He argued that this hierarchical system originated during European colonial expansion and continued through industrial capitalism into the era of globalization, enabling wealth accumulation in core economies while reinforcing dependency in peripheral societies.

An issue that forms the basis of debates in development theory is whether the causes of underdevelopment are primarily attributable to domestic factors or global structural forces. Neoliberal and modernization theorists tend to attribute underdevelopment to corruption, poor governance, and weak institutions in developing countries (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Dependency theorists, by contrast, argue that underdevelopment is fundamentally rooted in structural inequalities embedded within the global capitalist system.

Despite globalization and technological advances transforming the international economy, dependency relationships have not disappeared. Instead, they have been reconfigured into new forms, including financial, technological, and digital dependency. Many developing countries continue to rely on advanced economies for industrial products, technological innovation, financial resources, and digital infrastructure, while remaining concentrated in the lower-value segments of global production networks.

Neo-Colonialism and Neoliberal Globalization

The achievement of political independence for Africa, Asia, and Latin America in the mid-twentieth century raised hopes for economic liberation and autonomy. However, there is a general consensus among scholars that political independence did not dismantle the structural inequalities embedded within the capitalist world economy. On the contrary, new forms of economic subjugation emerged through international financial institutions, neoliberal economic policies, and multinational corporations. This condition was described as neo-colonialism because formally independent states remained economically dependent on external powers.



A major critique of neo-colonialism was advanced by Kwame Nkrumah in his book *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. Nkrumah (1965) argued that political independence without economic autonomy merely replaced direct colonial rule with indirect forms of economic and political dominance. From this perspective, many developing countries remained dependent on foreign investment, unequal trading arrangements, and external political influence, all of which constrained genuine economic self-sufficiency.

Another important phenomenon that contributed to the persistence of dependency relationships was neoliberal globalization, which emerged in the late twentieth century. During the debt crises of the 1980s and 1990s, international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank implemented Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) across many developing countries. These programmes promoted fiscal austerity, privatization, trade liberalization, and reduced government intervention in economic activities. Proponents of neoliberalism argued that economic deregulation and globalization would stimulate economic growth, efficiency, and development.

From the perspective of critical political economy, however, neoliberal globalization strengthened asymmetrical power relations within the international economy. Although David Harvey and Joseph Stiglitz approach neoliberalism from different analytical perspectives, both argue that market-oriented reforms disproportionately benefited advanced economies while imposing significant economic and social costs on many developing countries. Harvey (2005) views neoliberalism as a political-economic project aimed at restoring elite class power through market expansion and capital accumulation, whereas Stiglitz (2002) criticizes Structural Adjustment Programmes for contributing to rising poverty, unemployment, and weakened public institutions in developing nations.

The expansion of multinational corporations further reinforced the existing structure of global production, in which developing countries tended to remain subordinate participants within the world market system. While globalization created opportunities for increased trade and investment, many scholars argue that its benefits were unevenly distributed, with technologically and economically advanced countries continuing to dominate global financial, productive, and political structures. Consequently, political independence did not necessarily translate into economic independence.

Digital Capitalism and Platform Power

The development of globalization in the current century has involved the incorporation of technology, especially digital platforms and capitalism based on data collection and commercialization. Capitalism in the current period does not simply involve the generation of goods in factories and trading of assets in financial markets but also entails the gathering, processing, and commercialization of information using digital media platforms. This process has come to be termed digital capitalism or platform capitalism, where multinational technology companies exert substantial control over digital infrastructure, data ecosystems, and algorithmic systems. Recent scholarship argues that these firms have further consolidated their dominance through artificial intelligence, reinforcing new forms of economic concentration and digital dependency within the global economy (Hung, 2024; Mussnug & Leonelli, 2024).

According to Nick Srnicek in his book *Platform Capitalism* (2017), Google, Meta, Amazon, and Microsoft are among the companies that have become powerful players in the global



economy owing to their ability to gather and monetize users' data. Recent studies extend Srnicek's analysis by arguing that digital platforms have evolved beyond intermediaries into global infrastructures that shape economic governance, technological innovation, and access to digital resources (Hung, 2024).

Likewise, Shoshana Zuboff's notion of "surveillance capitalism" shows how digital technologies transform individual behavior into data for predictive analytics for capitalist gain. As Zuboff (2019) argues, data extraction enables targeted marketing, behavioural manipulation, and algorithmic governance. Building on this perspective, Mussnug and Leonelli (2024) contend that contemporary data economies increasingly influence development trajectories by reinforcing unequal access to digital infrastructure, data resources, and AI capabilities between developed and developing countries.

Manuel Castells has further theorized the digital economy through the concept of the network society, where global power hierarchies are increasingly determined by the flow and control of information. In this paradigm, control over search engines, social networking platforms, cloud computing services, and e-commerce ecosystems provides structural advantages, leaving less economically advanced countries dependent on foreign-owned digital infrastructures.

Furthermore, the growth of the gig economy and digital labour platforms has transformed global labour practices, creating new asymmetries between digital platform owners and workers. Recent scholarship suggests that these transformations have further concentrated economic power within a small number of global technology firms, raising concerns about digital sovereignty, labour precarity, and unequal participation in the digital economy (Hung, 2024).

Data Colonialism and AI-Driven Inequality

Newer academic studies focus on digital capitalism and expand the criticism to define data colonialism as the latest phase in the global system of accumulation, where human actions are constantly captured and appropriated through digital infrastructures. Unlike the older models of colonial domination that depended on territories, labour, and natural resources, the modern era of capitalism increasingly requires the large-scale appropriation and commodification of data. Recent scholarship argues that advances in artificial intelligence have intensified these processes by concentrating control over data, computational infrastructure, and AI capabilities within a small number of technologically advanced countries and multinational technology corporations, thereby reinforcing existing global inequalities (Hung, 2024; Salami, 2024).

According to Michael Kwet (2019), there is a technological concentration in developed countries that have monopolized software infrastructure, cloud computing services, and internet infrastructure. In this regard, developing countries act as providers of digital labour and data while possessing limited control over the technologies they generate. Similarly, Hung (2024) argues that artificial intelligence has become a new architecture of global power in which ownership of computational resources, cloud infrastructure, and data ecosystems increasingly determines economic and geopolitical influence.

Another definition offered by Couldry and Mejias (2019) focuses on data colonialism as a continuation of traditional practices of accumulation, where social activities are transformed into economic value through data collection and surveillance. Building on this perspective,



Mussnug and Leonelli (2024) contend that contemporary AI systems reproduce unequal global data relations by reinforcing disparities in access to digital infrastructure, data resources, and technological capabilities between developed and developing countries.

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence has further intensified these concerns. The development of advanced artificial intelligence systems remains concentrated within a relatively small number of countries and technology companies that control high-performance computing infrastructure, semiconductor production, cloud computing services, and large-scale datasets. Salami (2024) argues that this concentration of technological capacity risks creating new forms of digital dependency, particularly for African and other developing countries that remain largely dependent on foreign AI technologies, platforms, and digital infrastructure. Consequently, most developing nations continue to depend on foreign technologies and digital systems, limiting their capacity to achieve technological sovereignty and independent innovation.

Recent scholarship has also drawn attention to emerging concerns surrounding algorithmic dependency, linguistic exclusion, AI bias, digital sovereignty, and unequal participation in AI governance (Hung, 2024; Salami, 2024). These developments suggest that artificial intelligence is not merely a technological innovation but also a new mechanism through which existing global inequalities are reproduced and, in some cases, intensified.

Gaps in Existing Literature

Existing scholarship provides substantial insight into colonialism, dependency theory, globalization, and digital capitalism. However, these bodies of literature are often treated as separate analytical domains rather than interconnected stages of a continuous transformation in global capitalist power.

Earlier studies focused on colonial extraction and imperial domination, while later research emphasized neoliberal globalization and institutional frameworks of development. More recent work examines platform capitalism, data extraction, artificial intelligence governance, digital colonialism, and technological sovereignty (Hung, 2024; Salami, 2024). However, limited research integrates these stages into a unified historical framework that explains the evolution from territorial colonialism to digital and algorithmic forms of control.

Additionally, while dependency theory and world-systems analysis remain central to understanding global inequality, many foundational formulations predate digital infrastructures and AI systems. As a result, insufficient attention has been given to how data governance, platform monopolies, and algorithmic systems reproduce contemporary forms of dependency.

This study addresses these gaps by integrating colonial political economy, dependency theory, and digital capitalism within a single analytical framework. It extends dependency theory into the era of artificial intelligence by examining how data commodification, algorithmic governance, and digital infrastructures function as contemporary mechanisms of global inequality, thereby contributing to ongoing debates on digital sovereignty, AI governance, and the future of development.



Theoretical Framework

The theoretical perspective taken for this research involves inter-disciplinary theories, such as dependency theory, world systems theory, and digital colonialism theory, which provide the historical basis for understanding the changes that have occurred in the global economic system from colonial extraction to digital capitalism and artificial intelligence-based management systems. As a result, all of these theories can be used together to illustrate changes that have occurred throughout history.

Dependency Theory

According to dependency theory, underdevelopment is a structural characteristic that arises from the way in which developing countries have been integrated into the capitalist global economy. This does not arise out of the deficiencies within the developing nations but is a product of the process of unequal exchange between advanced and peripheral economies.

For instance, Andre Gunder Frank (1967) states that peripheral economies were integrated into global capitalism in a manner that ensured the extraction of surplus value by industrial centers. Moreover, according to Samir Amin, unequal exchange hinders industrialization and technological innovation in peripheral economies.

This theory can help to understand the nature of dependency through which colonial economic relations have developed into current dependencies involving finances and technology. In today's world, this involves dependence on platforms, digital infrastructure, and even artificial intelligence owned by technologically superior countries.

World-Systems Theory

Wallerstein's world-systems theory views the world economy as a hierarchical system made up of core, semi-periphery, and peripheral regions. The core regions control the processes of production, finance, and technology development, while the peripheral regions provide labor and raw materials.

This arrangement, which dates back to the colonial era, has continued through industrialization, globalization, and now the age of digital capitalism to allow for constant concentration of wealth and technology among core regions while the periphery remains dependent.

In terms of this particular research, world-systems theory provides the theoretical basis for understanding how the world economy of today perpetuates historical divisions via access to digital technologies such as artificial intelligence.

Digital Colonialism

Digital colonialism is an expansion of classical political economy into the digital world, which examines the exercise of power through data, platforms, and other digital infrastructure. In doing so, it posits that the current structures of capitalism replicate the colonial logic of extraction, except this time digitally.

According to Kwet (2019), multinational tech companies and wealthy states wield significant influence over global digital infrastructure, while developing states are treated as providers of data, labour, and consumers. In a similar vein, data colonialism, according to Couldry and



Mejias (2019), is about the appropriation of social life via constant data collection and commodification.

Digital colonialism is used in this research to understand how digital colonialism creates dependencies, in which power lies within the hands of a few global entities through AI and platform capitalism.

Theoretical Synthesis

In combination, these three theoretical perspectives offer a comprehensive perspective on this study. Dependency theory addresses the origins of inequality world systems theory addresses its hierarchical nature, and digital colonialism addresses its modern form within digital capitalism and algorithmic governance.

In combination, they reveal that although the means by which global domination occurs have changed from colonial exploitation and industrial production to data extraction and algorithmic governance, the unequal power structures in the world economy continue to persist.

METHODOLOGY

The research article adopts a qualitative research approach with historical and interpretive perspectives based on political economy theory. In particular, it analyses the evolution of the global economic structure from colonial exploitation through digital capitalism and artificial intelligence governance. Instead of mathematical modelling, the research emphasises the critical interpretation of historical trends, institutional changes, and academic discussions due to the complexity of the subject under investigation. A qualitative approach was considered most appropriate because the study seeks to explain the historical evolution of global economic structures and the changing nature of economic dependency rather than to test causal relationships using quantitative data.

Research Design

The design of the study is qualitative, based on historical political economy. With such a design, it will be possible to observe how economic systems around the world develop over time, as well as the ways in which historical structures continue to influence current processes of inequality and development. The history of the development of global capitalism will be traced throughout the different stages that follow one another: colonialism, industrial capitalism, neoliberal globalization, digital capitalism, and AI-led economic systems.

Interdisciplinarity is chosen as an important aspect of the study, as it will be carried out within the framework of international political economy, development studies, post-colonial theory, and digital economy studies. The study also employs a thematic analytical approach to organise and interpret the literature. The selected sources were analysed according to key themes, including colonial extraction, dependency theory, neoliberal globalization, digital capitalism, and artificial intelligence. This thematic organisation enabled the study to identify patterns of continuity and transformation in the evolution of the global economic order.



Data Sources

The design of the study is qualitative, based on historical political economy. With such a design, it is possible to observe how economic systems around the world have developed over time, as well as the ways in which historical structures continue to influence contemporary processes of inequality and development. The evolution of global capitalism is examined across successive stages, namely colonialism, industrial capitalism, neoliberal globalization, digital capitalism, and AI-driven economic systems.

Interdisciplinarity is an important aspect of the study, as the analysis draws upon international political economy, development studies, postcolonial theory, and digital economy studies.

The study also employs a thematic approach to organise and interpret the literature. The selected sources were examined according to key themes, including colonial extraction, dependency theory, neoliberal globalization, digital capitalism, and artificial intelligence. This thematic organisation enabled the study to identify patterns of continuity and transformation in the evolution of the global economic order.

Analytical Framework

The analysis is based on an interdisciplinary approach that integrates dependency theory, world-systems theory, and digital colonialism theory.

Dependency theory offers insights into the legacy of colonial exploitation and how it led to long-term economic dependence and exploitative trade relations between developed and developing nations.

World-systems theory perceives the global economic system as a hierarchical network comprising core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral economies, in which economic and technological dominance remains concentrated within the core economies.

Digital colonialism theory expands upon these theoretical constructs by explaining how contemporary digital technologies reproduce economic dependency through digital platforms, data extraction, and artificial intelligence.

The analytical framework conceptualises the evolution of the global economic order as a continuous process in which successive stages of capitalist development reshape, rather than eliminate, historical patterns of dependency, as illustrated in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Analytical framework

Source: Developed by the author (2026), based on Dependency Theory (Frank, 1967; Amin, 1976), World-Systems Theory (Wallerstein, 1974), and Digital Colonialism Theory (Kwet, 2019; Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

Together, these frameworks allow the study to interpret digital capitalism and AI governance as a continuation and transformation of historical systems of global inequality rather than a rupture from them. The analytical framework also guided the interpretation of the literature by providing the theoretical lens through which historical and contemporary developments were examined.

Case Study Selection

The research applies a comparative case study approach in which Nigeria, India, and China were selected because each country represents a distinct relationship with digital capitalism and technological development.

Nigeria was selected as an example of digital dependency within the Global South, reflecting rapid digitalization alongside significant reliance on foreign-owned digital platforms.

India was selected to illustrate an emerging model of digital capitalism characterised by increasing digital regulation and technological sovereignty while still maintaining important forms of external technological dependence.

Lastly, China was selected as an example of a state-led model of digital capitalism characterised by strong domestic platform development, substantial technological investment, and an expanding global presence in artificial intelligence and digital infrastructure.



Limitations of the Study

This study employs secondary data, which limits its ability to capture real-time empirical variations across different national contexts.

Furthermore, due to the rapid pace of developments in artificial intelligence and digital technologies, new developments may emerge more quickly than the available academic literature can document, thereby limiting the temporal scope of the analysis.

Lastly, owing to the broad historical period covered by this research, the analysis does not examine detailed empirical evidence relating to specific countries or industries beyond the selected case studies.

COLONIAL EXTRACTION AND THE HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

The present-day world economic system has its roots in history, especially in the colonization of Europe and the mercantile practices followed by colonial powers in the exploitation of lands of other continents, including Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Since the fifteenth century, colonization created an interrelated global economic system where economic dominance was achieved by the powers of Europe through the subjugation and domination of lands and the peoples inhabiting them.

Mercantilism and Early Imperial Expansion

The early colonial expansion by Europeans followed mercantilism ideas, where wealth in the world was assumed to be limited and under state control. The expansion involved nations like England, France, Spain, and Portugal, who aimed to acquire territories, monopolize trade, and accumulate bullion to bolster their national economies.

Colonies were set up to be dependent on the European economy through the provision of raw materials and being outlets for industrial goods. Early practices of unequal exchanges came into existence and laid the basis for the development of a European-dominated global trading system.

Slavery and Primitive Accumulation

One of the key practices of the colonial exploitation of African people was the Atlantic Slave Trade, whereby millions of people were shipped to the Americas to work on plantations producing commodities like sugar, cotton, and tobacco, thus creating a lot of money for the Europeans. According to Karl Marx, this type of practice can be called primitive accumulation since it entailed violent means of acquiring the initial money necessary for capitalism. In other words, slavery can be regarded as one of the bases of world capitalism rather than just its peripheral phenomenon. Eric Williams emphasizes that the money earned via slavery helped finance Britain's Industrial Revolution, thus debunking the myth that Europe succeeded due to internal factors only.



Colonial Resource Extraction and Economic Restructuring

However, besides the exploitation through slavery, colonial administrators restructured the economies in their colonies to suit their needs. The economies of the colonies were organized into a mono-export system that emphasized minerals and agricultural goods as the main products.

In Africa, the introduction of colonial taxation, forced labor, and export-production led to the destruction of the African economies and ensured that the surplus value accrued was directed towards the economies of Europe (Rodney, 1972). In India, colonialism weakened the manufacturing sector in the region, especially in textiles. Latin American colonialism, carried out by the Spanish and Portuguese, was mainly based on the mining of silver.

Colonialism and Industrial Capitalism

There was no decrease in colonial extraction in the period when industrial capitalism came into being; instead, it was further strengthened. The colonies were important in providing the required raw materials for the industries in Europe and served as captive consumers of the finished goods produced in those factories.

This system made possible the constant transfer of value to industrial centers from the colonized nations. Hence, colonialism was not an external force in the process of capitalistic formation but rather its intrinsic part.

Colonial Patterns in Regional Contexts

In Africa, the economies were transformed into ones that produced cash crops as well as minerals, resulting in an extended period of reliance on international commodity markets. De-industrialization in India left its economy incapable of competing within the industrial economy of Britain but made it an effective provider of raw materials and consumer goods. Latin America's economies that focused on extracting natural resources maintained a pattern of dependency as well as internal social inequality.

Nevertheless, there was a consistent pattern in all these systems.

Colonial Legacy and Global Inequality

The colonial system of extraction has established a system of structural dependence and inequity that continues to define the modern-day global economy. The end of colonialism does not mark the end of the economic structures established during this period because these structures have continued through global trade relationships, financial arrangements, and technology dependency.

Thus, inequality in today's world can be traced to colonial-era accumulation strategies that ensured that Europe could industrialize at the expense of the development potential of colonized nations. In other words, colonialism cannot be described as an isolated phenomenon because it marked only the first step toward the global economic systems of neoliberalism, digital capitalism, and AI-driven economies.



NEOLIBERAL GLOBALIZATION AND NEO-COLONIAL DEPENDENCY

Colonialism and the subsequent shift to independence in the middle of the twentieth century were major changes to the international order. But despite this change in political power, many countries did not achieve economic sovereignty during this period. Instead, world power structures were reshaped using economic systems and market processes, which helped sustain or rework dependency relationships. It is for this reason that neoliberal globalization has been viewed by many as simply an extension of colonial economic policies through institutionalized means.

Global Financial Architecture and Bretton Woods Institutions

The global financial system after the Second World War, developed via the Bretton Woods institutions of the IMF and World Bank, led to a hierarchical global economic system where advanced countries exerted considerable control over global financial governance.

Financial assistance was dependent on economic policies that conformed to the institutional economic paradigm, leading to external control of domestic economic policies. This led to conditional development, whereby economic policymaking in developing countries became increasingly subject to external financial institutions.

Debt Crisis and Structural Adjustment

The debt crises that occurred during the eighties and nineties played a major role in increasing the extent of external dependence of many developing countries, especially African and Latin American nations.

Debt restructuring policies made foreign financial institutions more influential in formulating domestic policies and thereby deprived countries of economic sovereignty and made them accountable to foreign entities.

Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) also contributed towards this by making austerity policies, privatization, trade liberalization, and deregulation mandatory for receiving assistance from international institutions.

While these policies were aimed at ensuring stability and growth, they were often characterized by decreased government expenditure, higher levels of inequality, and weak state capacity.

Trade Liberalisation and Global Value Chains

Neoliberal globalization promoted trade liberalisation as a pathway to development through global market integration. However, many developing economies entered global markets with limited industrial capacity and weak technological foundations.

As a result, trade liberalisation often reinforced existing structural inequalities, with developing countries specialising in low-value primary commodity exports while importing high-value manufactured and technological goods. This reinforced unequal positioning within global value chains and sustained dependency on advanced industrial economies.



Multinational Corporations and Production Networks

The growth of multinational companies has led to the restructuring of world production via transnational production chains that range from manufacturing and services to finance. Although these linkages contribute to globalization, they have also resulted in ownership, technology, and profits being controlled by developed countries.

Developing countries are usually integrated into global production chains as cheap production centers, while the higher value-added activities like branding and design are kept in the corporate headquarters located in developed countries.

Neoliberal Globalization as Structured Dependency

According to the theory of critical political economy, neoliberal globalization is a shift rather than a diminution of dependency. Colonialism was based on the use of territory and extraction. While neoliberalism works through financial institutions, trade rules, corporate networks, and conditional policies.

Neoliberalism is viewed by David Harvey as a political economic strategy aimed at accumulating capital through market liberalism and institutional reformation. In his turn, Joseph Stiglitz stresses that global economic governance may often be characterized by institutional asymmetry, restricting the policy choice of developing nations.

Continuity with Colonial Economic Structures

Neoliberal globalization shares many similarities despite being in different forms when compared to the economy during the colonial period. Both the models are based on inequalities in exchange, imbalances in power, and value production within the advanced world countries.

Whereas colonization involved the process of occupying territories, extraction of resources through colonization is carried out through the mechanism of finance, trading policies, intellectual property rights, and global networks of production under neoliberal globalization.

These similarities make it easier to understand the formation of digital capitalism and AI economies in today's world.

DIGITAL CAPITALISM AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC ORDER

The contemporary world economic system is characterized by the emergence of digital capitalism, along with the increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI) in all aspects of the economy, government, and society at large. Such development means a structural change from the previous modes of industrial or financial capitalism to the emergence of a new kind of capitalism based on the generation of information via digital communication among people.

The main feature of the change is the centralisation of economic power in multinational tech firms and countries capable of operating at the forefront of digital and technological innovations. Including digital infrastructure, cloud computing, and AI innovation ecosystems (UNCTAD, 2024; World Bank, 2021). These inequalities create new forms of global inequality



extending those created under colonial and neoliberal systems, but in this case, via technological means rather than territorial ones (Couldry and Mejias, 2019; Kwet, 2019).

Platform Capitalism and Digital Concentration

The structure of digital capitalism involves platform-based firms that act as mediators for economic, social, and informational transactions. Platforms gain their profits not from the process of production itself but from controlling the ecosystems in which information and digital interactions take place (Srnicek, 2017). The effect of a network is a powerful one which means that increased activity leads to monopolisation and competition elimination.

In accordance with the concept of platform capitalism, companies like Google, Meta, Amazon, and Microsoft are key gatekeepers of the digital world. They control the flow of information, market transactions, and infrastructure necessary for computing (Srnicek, 2017; UNCTAD, 2024).

Data Extraction and Surveillance Capitalism

A defining feature of digital capitalism is the systematic extraction of behavioural data. In this system, human activity is continuously converted into data points that are analysed, predicted, and monetised (Zuboff, 2019).

This process extends beyond traditional economic production into what can be described as an extractive logic of surveillance, where everyday digital interaction becomes a resource for algorithmic refinement and commercial optimisation (Zuboff, 2019; Couldry and Mejias, 2019). Data is therefore not a by-product of digital systems but the central raw material of contemporary capitalism.

This shift represents a transition from industrial value creation to data-based accumulation, where economic power is increasingly derived from informational asymmetry and predictive control (Zuboff, 2019).

Cloud Infrastructure, Semiconductor Power, and Technological Dependency

Underlying platform capitalism is a deeply centralised global infrastructure composed of cloud computing systems, semiconductor supply chains, and AI development ecosystems. These infrastructures are highly concentrated in a small number of advanced economies and corporate actors (UNCTAD, 2024; World Bank, 2021).

Control over these systems generates structural dependency for developing nations, which rely on externally owned platforms for digital storage, computation, communication, and increasingly, public governance functions (Kwet, 2019; UNCTAD, 2024). Semiconductor production, in particular, functions as a critical bottleneck in global technological development, reinforcing geopolitical asymmetries in access to advanced computing capacity (UNCTAD, 2024).

This infrastructural concentration reproduces a form of digital dependency in which developing economies remain consumers rather than producers of core technological systems (Couldry and Mejias, 2019; Kwet, 2019).



Artificial Intelligence and Algorithmic Governance

Artificial intelligence represents the most advanced stage of digital capitalism. AI systems are now embedded across financial markets, security systems, public administration, healthcare, education, and industrial production. These systems depend on large-scale datasets, computational infrastructure, and specialised research capacities concentrated within a limited number of global actors. Artificial intelligence governance has emerged as a critical issue for global economic and political stability (United Nations, 2024).

AI increasingly functions as a form of algorithmic governance, shaping decisions related to credit allocation, employment, policing, and information access. However, these systems are often opaque, with limited transparency regarding how decisions are produced and whose interests are embedded within algorithmic design. Concerns surrounding transparency, accountability, and fairness have become central to AI governance debates (UNESCO, 2021).

The governance of AI is therefore not neutral but reflects underlying power asymmetries in data ownership, infrastructure control, and model development (Crawford, 2021).

Digital Inequality and the Reconfiguration of Global Dependency

Although digital capitalism is frequently framed as a democratising force, it reproduces and intensifies global inequalities in new forms. Developing nations are primarily integrated into the digital economy as data sources, low-cost digital labour pools, and consumer markets for foreign-owned platforms.

This structure mirrors earlier colonial and neoliberal patterns of unequal exchange, but now operates through informational and technological channels rather than direct territorial or financial control. The result is a reconfiguration of dependency in which technological ownership, data governance, and algorithmic infrastructure remain concentrated in advanced economies.

Artificial Intelligence and Technological Sovereignty

Rapid advances and the wide proliferation of AI technologies have intensified debates about technological sovereignty. As defined here, technological sovereignty refers to a nation's capability to control the development course of its digital infrastructures, data systems, and technologies. The era of digital capitalism now sees sovereignty as contingent upon a country's availability of basic computation infrastructures, AI capacities, and data governance (Acemoglu & Johnson, 2023).

Lack of such capacities among developing nations leads to an inherent dependency on imported technologies and platforms, which might undermine upgrading and innovation opportunities and reduce flexibility in designing policies for digital transformation (Acemoglu & Johnson, 2023).

However, in addition to their problems, the emergence and proliferation of AI technologies also create opportunities for radical changes through economic pathways, such as leapfrogging—a shortcut to adopting advanced technologies or digital industrialization, the idea championed by the African Union in 2024. However, such benefits can be realized only



by circumventing deep-seated structural limitations related to the hierarchy of technology innovation (Acemoglu & Johnson, 2023; African Union, 2024).

In numerous countries in their developmental stage, lack of internal capability will mean that the extent of their reliance on external systems will be greater. This, in turn, means less potential for national industrial development and innovations as well as less maneuverability of policy-makers in the design of digital policy strategies (Acemoglu & Johnson, 2023).

The second crucial area where cooperation may help create equitable growth through AI is the role cooperation may play in facilitating equitable development and regulation in the sphere of AI. International core actions should revolve around the principles of technology transfer, local capacity building, and cooperation. It is imperative that these principles form the basis of international action as a guarantee of achieving an inclusive impact of AI on all parties involved (African Union, 2024).

Without such a development and regulation-focused strategy, the process of AI evolution will only continue the same dependency trends and create disparities, which was noted by the African Union in 2024 (African Union, 2024).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study has examined the historical evolution of the world economic order from colonial extraction to contemporary digital capitalism and artificial intelligence governance. It has argued that global inequality is not incidental or transitional, but structurally embedded within successive phases of capitalist expansion. Across these phases, the mechanisms of accumulation have evolved, while the underlying logic of unequal exchange and dependency has remained consistent.

The analysis began with colonialism, which established the foundational architecture of the modern global economy through mercantilist expansion, slavery, and systematic resource extraction. Far from being an external driver of European development, colonial exploitation significantly contributed to industrial capital formation while embedding a global division of labour in which colonised regions were structurally positioned as exporters of raw materials and importers of manufactured goods.

The study then traced the transition to neoliberal globalization, which replaced territorial domination with institutional and financial mechanisms of control. Through the Bretton Woods institutions, structural adjustment programmes, debt regimes, and trade liberalisation, developing economies were integrated into a global system of conditional sovereignty. While formal political independence expanded, economic autonomy remained constrained through externally governed financial and policy structures.

The emergence of digital capitalism introduced a new accumulation regime centred on data extraction, platform monopolies, and algorithmic governance. Value creation increasingly shifted toward the capture and monetisation of behavioural data, consolidating unprecedented economic power within multinational technology corporations. In this configuration,



developing nations are largely positioned as data providers, labour pools, and consumer markets within global digital value chains.

Finally, the rise of artificial intelligence represents the most advanced phase of this transformation. AI systems now mediate key domains of production, governance, and decision-making, yet their development remains highly concentrated within a small number of technologically dominant states and corporations. This concentration of computational infrastructure, data control, and algorithmic capability deepens existing global hierarchies and introduces new forms of technological dependency.

Overall, the study demonstrates that the world economic order has evolved through interconnected phases rather than discrete ruptures.

While the instruments of domination have shifted—from territorial control to financial conditionality, and from industrial production to data-driven and algorithmic systems—the structural logic of unequal accumulation has remained fundamentally stable.

The study contributes to the existing literature by integrating colonial political economy, dependency theory, world-systems theory, digital capitalism, and artificial intelligence within a single historical framework. In doing so, it extends dependency theory into the digital era by demonstrating how data governance, platform monopolies, and AI-driven technologies function as contemporary mechanisms through which global inequalities continue to evolve. These findings provide important theoretical implications for researchers seeking to understand the relationship between technological transformation, global economic governance, and international development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

For Developing Nations

First, priority should be given to strengthening digital infrastructure, including broadband expansion, data centre development, and resilient national digital ecosystems capable of supporting innovation and technological growth.

Second, sustained investment in artificial intelligence capacity is essential. This includes reforms in education, expansion of research institutions, and targeted development of technical expertise in data science, machine learning, and software engineering.

Third, developing states should pursue technological sovereignty by reducing excessive dependence on foreign-owned platforms and strengthening domestic control over digital infrastructure, data governance, and critical technological systems.

Fourth, governments should actively support innovation ecosystems through funding for start-ups, incentives for local technological entrepreneurship, and policies that facilitate knowledge production and digital industrialisation.

Fifth, robust data governance frameworks should be implemented to ensure data protection, fair value capture, and accountability in digital economic activities.



For International Governance Institutions

At the global level, there is a need to reform digital governance structures to ensure more equitable participation of developing nations in decision-making processes surrounding artificial intelligence and digital infrastructure.

Stronger regulatory frameworks are also required to address the concentration of power within multinational technology corporations, particularly in relation to platform monopolies, data ownership, and digital market dominance.

Finally, international cooperation should prioritise equitable AI development through technology transfer, capacity building, and shared governance mechanisms. Without such reforms, the continued expansion of artificial intelligence risks reinforcing historical patterns of dependency through increasingly sophisticated technological and digital mechanisms (IMF, 2024; United Nations, 2024).

Future Research

Future research should build upon this conceptual analysis through empirical investigations of digital dependency and artificial intelligence governance across developing countries. Comparative studies examining the experiences of countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America would provide deeper insights into how digital capitalism and AI shape national development trajectories. In addition, future research could assess the effectiveness of digital sovereignty policies, AI regulatory frameworks, and regional technology initiatives in reducing technological dependency and promoting more inclusive and sustainable economic development.

About the Author

Adeyemi Aderombi

- (MRes, MSc, MSc, BSc, BSc, DET, FHEA, MBAM, MSET, MCISON)
- Lecturer in Business and Management, Icon College of Technology and Management

REFERENCES

- Acemoglu, D., & Johnson, S. (2023). *Power and progress: Our thousand-year struggle over technology and prosperity*. PublicAffairs.
- Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. A. (2012). *Why nations fail: The origins of power, prosperity and poverty*. Profile Books.
- Amin, S. (1976). *Unequal development: An essay on the social formations of peripheral capitalism*. Monthly Review Press.
- Castells, M. (1996). *The rise of the network society*. Blackwell Publishers.
- Couldry, N., & Mejias, U. A. (2019). *The costs of connection: How data is colonizing human life and appropriating it for capitalism*. Stanford University Press.
- Crawford, K. (2021). *Atlas of AI: Power, politics, and the planetary costs of artificial intelligence*. Yale University Press.
- Fanon, F. (1961). *The wretched of the earth* (C. Farrington, Trans.). Grove Press.



- Frank, A. G. (1967). *Capitalism and underdevelopment in Latin America*. Monthly Review Press.
- Harvey, D. (2005). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press.
- Hung, K.-H. (2024). Artificial intelligence as planetary assemblages of coloniality: The new power architecture driving a tiered global data economy. *Big Data & Society*, 11(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/20539517241289443>
- International Monetary Fund. (2024). *Gen-AI: Artificial intelligence and the future of work*. International Monetary Fund.
- Kwet, M. (2019). Digital colonialism: US empire and the new imperialism in the Global South. *Race & Class*, 60(4), 3–26.
- Marx, K. (1867). *Capital: A critique of political economy* (Vol. 1). Otto Meissner Verlag.
- Mussnug, A. M., & Leonelli, S. (2024). A critical framing of data for development: Historicizing data relations and AI. *Development and Change*, 55(5), 1109–1121. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12857>
- Nkrumah, K. (1965). *Neo-colonialism: The last stage of imperialism*. Thomas Nelson & Sons.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2021). *OECD framework for the classification of AI systems: A tool for effective AI policies*. OECD Publishing.
- Rodney, W. (1972). *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*. Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications.
- Salami, A. O. (2024). Artificial intelligence, digital colonialism, and the implications for Africa's future development. *Data & Policy*, 6, e67. <https://doi.org/10.1017/dap.2024.75>
- Srnicek, N. (2017). *Platform capitalism*. Polity Press.
- Stiglitz, J. E. (2002). *Globalization and its discontents*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- United Nations. (2024). *Governing AI for humanity: Final report of the High-Level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence*. United Nations.
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (2021). *Digital economy report 2021: Cross-border data flows and development—For whom the data flow*. United Nations.
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (2024). *Digital economy report 2024*. United Nations.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2025). *Human development report 2025: A matter of choice. People and possibilities in the age of AI*. United Nations Development Programme.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2021). *Recommendation on the ethics of artificial intelligence*. UNESCO.
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (2025). *Technology and Innovation Report 2025: Inclusive artificial intelligence for development*. United Nations. <https://unctad.org/publication/technology-and-innovation-report-2025>
- Wallerstein, I. (1974). *The modern world-system I: Capitalist agriculture and the origins of the European world-economy in the sixteenth century*. Academic Press.
- Williams, E. (1944). *Capitalism and slavery*. University of North Carolina Press.
- World Bank. (2021). *World development report 2021: Data for better lives*. World Bank.
- World Economic Forum. (2025). *Future of jobs report 2025*. World Economic Forum.
- Zuboff, S. (2019). *The age of surveillance capitalism: The fight for a human future at the new frontier of power*. PublicAffairs.