Key Terms and Reflection

AiCE Africanism & Pan-African Studies — Bringing the lesson together

Key Terms and Concepts

Term	Definition
Neocolonialism	Nkrumah's concept: the continuation of external economic and political control over African states after formal political independence.
Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP)	IMF/World Bank loan conditions requiring African governments to cut public spending, privatise state enterprises, and liberalise trade, with devastating documented social consequences.
Washington Consensus	The neoliberal economic doctrine — free markets, privatisation, minimal government — that underpinned structural adjustment policy.
CFA Franc	A currency used by 14 Francophone African countries, pegged to the Euro, requiring 50% of reserves held in the French Treasury.
Resource Curse	The phenomenon whereby countries with abundant natural resource wealth often experience weaker development, more conflict, and worse governance than resource-poor countries.
Land Grabbing	Large-scale foreign acquisition of African agricultural land, often displacing communities with unrecognised customary land rights.
Food Sovereignty	The right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture systems rather than having them dictated by international market forces.
African Union (AU)	The continental political body, established 2002, replacing the OAU, with an expanded mandate including intervention in cases of genocide and unconstitutional government change.

Term	Definition
AfCFTA	The African Continental Free Trade Area, operational from 2021 — the world's largest free trade area by number of participating countries.
Agenda 2063	The AU's 50-year strategic framework for African integration, development, and cultural renaissance, titled 'The Africa We Want.'

Think It Through

These questions have no single correct answer. Argue from evidence, and write down your reasoning even if you have no one to discuss it with.

- Structural Adjustment Programmes are now widely acknowledged, even by the IMF and World Bank, to have caused significant harm. Should there be accountability or reparations for this harm? What would that look like in practice?
- The CFA franc system provides monetary stability but limits monetary sovereignty. If you were advising a CFA franc country's government, would you recommend staying in the system, reforming it, or exiting it? What would you weigh in making that recommendation?
- Is China's engagement with Africa fundamentally different from earlier European colonial and neocolonial engagement, or is it a new iteration of the same basic pattern? Defend your answer with specific evidence from this unit.
- The AfCFTA has the potential to be transformative, but its success depends on political will that has been inconsistent in other AU initiatives. What specific obstacles do you think are most likely to limit its implementation, and how might they be overcome?
- This unit argues that 'technological sovereignty' is central to African economic sovereignty in the 21st century. What would it concretely look like for an African country to achieve technological sovereignty? What are the biggest obstacles?

Go Deeper

- SAP Case Study: Research the structural adjustment experience of one specific African country in depth — Zambia, Ghana, or another. Document the specific policies imposed and their measurable social and economic consequences.
- The CFA Franc Debate: Read arguments from both defenders and critics of the CFA franc system. Write a policy brief recommending a specific path forward for CFA franc countries.
- Land Deal Investigation: Research one specific documented land acquisition deal in Africa. Who acquired the land, on what terms, and what happened to the communities who previously used it?
- AfCFTA Sector Analysis: Choose one economic sector (agriculture, textiles, technology, or another) and analyse how full AfCFTA implementation could specifically transform trade and production in that sector.
- Technological Sovereignty Proposal: Write a 500-word proposal for one concrete step an African government, company, or individual could take to build greater technological sovereignty, drawing on the concepts in this unit.

Key Takeaways

Political independence, won across Africa between 1957 and 1980, did not automatically produce economic independence. Neocolonialism — the continuation of external economic control through debt, structural adjustment, currency arrangements like the CFA franc, land acquisition, and commodity dependency — has kept many African economies structurally subordinate to external interests, exactly as Nkrumah predicted in 1965.

Africa has built real institutional responses to this reality: the African Union, imperfect but a genuine advance over the OAU's protective shield for dictators, and the AfCFTA, potentially the most transformative economic initiative in African history if fully implemented. New partnerships with China and the wider Global South offer expanded options, though not automatic liberation from dependency.

Genuine economic sovereignty — monetary control, value addition, deepened intra-African trade, debt justice, institutional capacity, and technological sovereignty —

remains the unfinished project of African liberation. It is a project this course, and the generation of Pan-African software engineers it aims to produce, exists specifically to advance.

> *"The next scramble for Africa will not be fought with gunboats and treaties. It will be fought with code, data, and algorithms. Africa cannot afford to lose this one too."*
>
> **— Adesina Olagunju, Founder, AiCE**