

**Neocolonialism in Black Panther****“Wakanda forever” Movie**

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*English Literary Criticism, Boanerges: Makarios Education Journal*

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*"One who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth  
and one who gives gifts to the rich—both come to poverty."*

**- Proverbs 22:16 (NIV)**

**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to show *Neocolonialism* in the movie *"Black Panther: Wakanda Forever,"* employing the analytical framework of *Marxism* by Karl Marx and complemented by Foucault's theory of *Power*. The analysis unveils the disapproval of neocolonialism from Karl Marx's perspective through an in-depth exploration of the movie. The visual composition of the cinematography is conveyed along with the analysis of the movie. Embracing the Marxist approach, this study investigates the neocolonialism caused by external powers' interest in the movie that has divided people even between social classes: *Underwater Kingdom vs Wakanda*. Three primary outcomes of neocolonialism emerge: **1) Resource Exploitation and Expansion (Namor):** Namor, as the king of Sea peoples, represents the pursuit of expanding a powerful and resource-rich kingdom's interests. His actions could mirror neocolonial tendencies by seeking to control and exploit resources beyond his own nation's borders by any means: coercive, persuasive, or by force, mirroring neocolonizers. **2) Technological Protection and Resistance (Shuri):** Shuri embodies the spirit of resistance against neocolonialism through her efforts to safeguard Wakanda's advanced technology. Her actions reflect a determination to prevent the appropriation of Wakanda's innovations by external forces, thereby preserving the nation's sovereignty and preventing technological exploitation. **3) Liberation and Ideological Influence (Erik Killmonger):** While not physically present, Killmonger's legacy influences the resistance perspective. His radical ideals of liberating oppressed communities using Wakanda's resources align with resistance's goals, highlighting the potential outcome of neocolonialism where powerful nations may manipulate resources to advance their ideological interests.

**INTRODUCTION**

*"Black Panther: Wakanda Forever"* is a 2022 Action/Adventure movie produced by Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures and directed by Ryan Coogler. The main characters include Namor (*Tenoch Huerta*), Shuri (Letitia Wright), Erik Killmonger (*Michael B Jordan*), Ramonda (*Angela Bassett*), Okoye (*Danai Gurira*), Nakia (*Lupita Nyong'o*), Ironheart (*Dominique Thorne*), W'kabi (*Daniel Kaluuya*), M'Baku (*Winston Duke*), Dr. Graham (*Lake Bell*), Aneka (*Michaela Coel*), and Martin Freeman (*Everett K. Ross*). The movie received several recognitions, including the 2023 *BET Awards* for Best Movie, 2023 *NAACP Image Awards* for Outstanding Ensemble Cast in Motion Picture, 2023 *Golden Globe Award* for

Best Supporting Actress-Motion Picture, 2023 Academy Award for Best Costume Design, and 2023 Critics' Choice Movie Award for Best Supporting.

The movie *"Wakanda Forever"* tells the story of Wakanda, a special place with advanced technology and rich traditions. The main character, King T'Challa, is no longer there, and the people of Wakanda are facing tough challenges to keep their amazing technology and culture alive. The movie shows how the brave citizens of Wakanda work together to protect their unique way of life, even when faced with new problems from inside and outside their country. These challenges lead Wakanda to an important turning point in its history. *"Wakanda Forever"* is all about how the people of Wakanda stay strong during hard times, remember their past, and deal with what's uncertain in the future.

The movie shows the audience of how the two strongholds, led by T'Calla and Namor conflicted with each other to show who is trustworthy to be the leader in Wakanda. This relates to the event that happens in the previous sequel, due to the historical occupancy of the outsiders who have always wanted the most powerful element, *"Vibranium"* that can be used to make the deadliest weapon on earth. Meanwhile, the exposure of this material has made Wakanda inevitably hunted for its source. In *Wakanda Forever*, it is the climax of the rise of the resistance against the outsiders that makes division among the indigenous peoples. In another case, the search of Vibranium has been vigilant using metal detectors, belonging to the international intelligence that T'Calla accused of the death of Ramonda. Furthermore, the appointment of Contessa Valentina De Fontaine (*Julia Louis-Dreyfus*), as the director of the foreign intelligence organization (and also Ross's ex-wife) worsened the conflict. The issue of Neocolonialism can be seen throughout the movie, such as: the Inequality in terms of class struggle, the loss of identity; foreign interference, and the dependence; political self-determination.

**Binary opposition**

<b>External Control</b>	<b>Cultural Autonomy</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Namor (Tenoch Huerta): As the king of Atlantis, Namor represents a powerful and resource-rich kingdom. His actions and decisions may be influenced by the desire to expand his nation's interests and maintain its status.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shuri (Letitia Wright): Shuri, the brilliant scientist and princess of Wakanda, embodies the spirit of resistance by striving to protect Wakanda's advanced technology from falling into the wrong hands and using it for the betterment of her people.</li> <li>Erik Killmonger (Michael B Jordan): While not present in the conventional sense, Killmonger's legacy influences the resistance perspective. His radical ideals and desire to use Wakanda's resources to liberate oppressed communities align with the resistance's goals.</li> </ul>

## METHOD

Having the data collected from the movie, the theory of Marxism that condemns the contrast of social classes, economy and politics argued by Karl Marx was used as the primary theory in criticizing the *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever* movie. This theory is often used to criticize some topics like, *class struggle, means of production, exploitation of labor, ideology and superstructure, colonialism and imperialism, alienation, revolution and change*. In the social context of the movie, Furthermore, the capitalist often exploits workers, in order to get what they desire without considering the consequences and the interests of others, which leads to a theory that is more directed to social problems caused by selfishness. In addition, the power theory by Michel Foucault was applied to explain how power works; a high social relationship that is complex, opposes some powerless parties. This theory mainly criticizes several aspects such as power and identity, power and global politics, resistance and subversion and others, the impact of history, the role of institutions. However, in the analysis, marxism theory is limited to discuss *class struggle, means of production, colonialism and imperialism*. And the power theory is narrowed to *technologies of power* In order to reveal the neocolonialism in the movie, “Black Panther: Wakanda Forever.”

## DISCUSSION

In the midst of this medium shot, the leader of the Talokan war troop is shown from the waist up among the others. The lighting focuses on the leader, meanwhile the troops are shown darker to emphasize the leader as the center of the character while giving the order to eliminate the scientist, “*Kill the scientist, I’ll deal with the witnesses.*” This is because their territory is intruded by the external powers: foreign intelligence agencies who are searching for the most valuable metal, Vibranium, to make weapons. Upon hearing these words at a glance, the nuance of the elements of evil from Talokan's words can be sensed as they are instructed to attack. This scene is the beginning of the struggle of the Talokan from the evil foreign country that



tries to steal the vibranium. Countries out there create technology in the form of a vibranium detection device, and discover that the center of the Vibranium distribution is under the sea, in Talocan to be precise. “*The colonial system practiced by capitalist countries is a true system of piracy, which rests on the principles of violence, pillage, and robbery.*” (Marx, K, 1977) Marx portrays colonialism as a system akin to piracy, asserting that capitalist nations employ violence, plunder, and theft in their quest for dominance over colonies. He suggests that the capitalist colonial project is driven by ruthless exploitation

and economic gain at the expense of the colonized populations. When this external force uses this technology, it eventually causes the Talocan people to get angry because they are actually living under the sea, so they feel disrespected.

The instruction to terminate the scientists occurs because of the foreign power that coercively tries to get Wakanda's resources by force. The film addresses the moral dilemmas faced by Wakandan leaders as they navigate their global responsibilities while preserving their culture and autonomy. Wakanda is depicted as a highly advanced nation with access to advanced technology and valuable resources, most notably vibranium. In humanitarian aid and development: with its advanced medical technology and resources, Wakanda could play a crucial role in providing humanitarian aid to less developed nations. Furthermore, in technological sharing: The ethical question of whether Wakanda should share its technological advancements with the rest of the world is central to the narrative. Exploring the consequences of such a decision, including potential benefits and risks, could be a significant theme. This parallels real-world debates about technology transfer and its impact on global inequality. *"The capitalist class cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society."* (Marx, 1848). He asserts that the capitalist class, which holds economic power, is intrinsically tied to the ongoing transformation of the means of production and the resulting shifts in social and economic relationships. This continuous revolutionizing of production methods not only shapes how goods are made but also redefines the very fabric of societal interactions. Marx's assertion suggests that capitalism's inherent need for innovation and progress fundamentally alters the structure of society, impacting everything from economic hierarchies to cultural norms. It means that they will do anything to get what they want even to the very root of the resource for the profits of the elites. Foucault's (1976) argued, *"People know what they do; frequently they know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what they do does."* It means that neocolonialism occurs in the form of the impact of the behavior of a community that does not think about the fate of others. In the previous sequel, the foreign power intrusively exploits vibranium; as a result, the history impact has divided the wakandas. In this case, they do know the impact of their behavior on others, often their desire overwhelms that makes them feel superior.

In the next scene, again the camera shoots in medium shots several times, showing Queen Ramonda seated as one of the global elites, saying *"I'm the queen of the most powerful nation in the world"* in the middle of the conference. Having Ramonda highlighted, the lighting focuses on her to be the center of the attention, while people in the background are blurred. The next thing she says, *"it has been our policy to never trade vibranium under any circumstance. Not because of the dangerous potential of vibranium, but because of the dangerous potential of you"*. The reason she says that is because the global elite keep forcing the Wakandas to share their resources. The queen refuses because she does not



want the vibranium to fall into the wrong hands. Nevertheless, her statements depict the absolute foreign power that controls the vibranium and its production. *"The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political, and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness,"* Marx, K. (1859). Marx emphasizes the significance of material conditions in shaping societal aspects. He argues that the economic structure (mode of production) influences the broader aspects of society, including politics, culture, and individual consciousness. This idea underscores the role of economic factors in



colonial dynamics. The global elites do not accept the fact that Wakandas are keeping the vibranium to themselves and by that they start attacking them and trying to steal the vibranium quietly without the Wakandas knowing. But it turns out, the Wakandas catch them red handed trying to break into a secured place where they keep the vibranium. Which caused a fight

between the elites and Wakandas. Just like what Queen Ramonda said, *"We mourn the loss of our king, but do not think for a second that Wakanda has lost the ability to protect their resources"*. This connects to the Marxist theory about colonialism and imperialism, which means that a country is trying to take over another country outside their national borders by force. It signifies the advanced stage of capitalism where powerful nations exert economic and political control over weaker nations, often leading to the concentration of capital and wealth in the hands of a few dominant states or corporations.

Wakandas form of resistance to the deprivation of rights is this trial where they straighten out their rights and defend their country from being controlled by the global elites. Karl Marx also gave an utterance that explicitly goes against the (new) concept of neocolonialism *"Workers of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains,"* (Marx, K., & Engels, F., 1848). Marx and Engels emphasize the shared struggles and common interests of the working class across national boundaries. By urging workers to unite, they advocate for a collective movement aimed at overthrowing the existing social, economic, and political structures that perpetuate inequality and exploitation. Foucault once said, *"Power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategic situation in a particular society."* (Foucault, 1990). He suggests that power is a result of strategic interactions and dynamics between individuals, groups, and institutions within a given society. The attribution of *"power"* to certain individuals or entities is a way of describing the complex interplay of influences, control, and authority that shape social relationships. In terms of Wakanda, they fight for the rights to protect the community as a result of being contained.

“Without the Black Panther, Wakanda will fall,” Namor says to Shuri on one occasion when he tries to persuade her to join the outside world who hunt for their Vibranium. In this scene, the camera takes a medium shot split in seconds to show the conversation between Namor and Shuri that is relaxing but serious at the same time. On Wakanda’s side, losing Black Panther puts them in a slump because he has been a figure of power in the community. *“This is what politics is: the organisation of a stable, unambiguous power relationship within a given society,”* (Foucault, M.,1997). Foucault emphasized the efforts of maintaining a sense of order and control in a society. This can involve someone who holds the authority in social construction. In the social context of Black Panther, the loss of T’Calla makes the community confused to decide who will lead them. However, Shuri insists herself to be the leader. In the next scene, it is shown that Namor tells his background story about how he acquires the power. He describes how he and his family are normal humans who suffer from disease and get the bluegrass tonic made by the shaman that enables him to breathe underwater and soon they get away from the war that is happening. From his past, it is known that he is part of the victims caused by the colonials. *“Colonization has a psychological impact on the colonized, and there's always the feeling of being between worlds, between languages, between cultures,”* (Anzaldúa, G. E.,1987). The psychological issue may impact the colonization that disrupts the cultural foundation, difficult to reconcile in the aspect of identity. The conflicting memory often becomes the legacy of colonialism.



In this scene, Namor emerges gradually from the water, his anger evident through his facial expressions. The camera shifts from bird’s eye view to long shot to show the entire movements in exact location. He joins his waiting soldiers, who reveal that his presence has diverted the royal guards' defenses from the palace. Namor defeats the guards, then confronts Queen Ramonda, who anticipated his arrival. Despite her peril, Ramonda instructs RiRi to avoid a mirror, indicating her selflessness as a leader. Namor attacks by impaling the palace window, flooding it. The queen's focus on others' safety, even in her own dire circumstances, exemplifies her leadership. Namor's water bomb ultimately drowns both Ramonda and RiRi, highlighting Ramonda's self-sacrifice. Namor points at Shuri, telling her that her mother's position now will be hers and she has to be the new leader of Wakanda.

In terms of Class struggle, both Wakanda and Talokan feel that both of them have a higher caste so that a clash occurred which caused a problem. Wakanda feels that their technology is much better even though they are not aware that they just lost their leader. On the other hand, Talokan feel they have a very good leader, which is Namor, but they also do not realize that their technology is not as strong as Wakanda's. This is what makes them mutually exalt their own caste. Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1848), argued, "*The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.*" Clashes among classes occur between regions due to the competing interests and resources to elevate their own caste. Foucault (1980) in his theory exerts, "*Where there is power, there is resistance.*" Based on this quote, it can be interpreted that the relationship between strength and resistance will always exist. Where there is one side that shows superiority and power, that is where resistance will naturally arise.

In the battle scene between Wakanda and Talokan, the battle that takes place is right above the sea that was taken using the *establishing shot* method that shows the changing condition of the calm water turned into aggression due to the war between Wakanda and Talokan. In the midst of a fierce and evenly matched war between Wakanda and Talokan,



marked by Wakanda's advanced technology and Talokan's formidable land and water powers, a pivotal showdown emerges between their leaders, Namor and Shuri. Despite Wakanda's technological prowess, Namor's innate superhuman abilities give him an edge, shaped by his lifelong combat training. Shuri, in contrast, is reliant on her intelligence and technological innovations, having never experienced actual battlefield combat. The clash between Namor and Shuri unfolds in a dry battlefield, each refusing to yield even as exhaustion takes its toll. Both leaders fight valiantly, their determination fueled by the weight of victory, symbolizing the critical role of leadership in the outcome of the conflict. Right before Shuri finishes off Namor, Namor strikes a spear into Shuri's stomach and even though Shuri is in a lot of pain she does not let Namor go. By the time Shuri has a chance to extinguish Namor but something inside her stops her so she does not finish Namor. Shuri says to Namor, "*Vengeance has consumed us.*" "It will not consume our people." The words Shuri says at that time are T'Calla's words said to Zemo that stops him from taking his own life. Shuri's last words to Namor highlight how wise she is, her ability to forgive, and how much her brother has shaped her thinking. In the end Wakanda and Talokan reunite with the power controlled by Wakanda under the leadership of Shuri.

Marx in his theory explains how revolution and change do not occur spontaneously or happen by themselves but by overthrowing the system that previously existed. This requires conscious awareness and organized action by those who wish to bring about revolutionary transformations. He wants to convey

that humans need to be able to see the good side of all the bad. Even though wars and bloodshed occur as a result of differences of opinion between the ideologies of Wakanda and Talokan, in the end, they all can become one again and achieve what they want to get. Marx argues that all changes and improvements begin with repulsion and encouragement from within. Furthermore, Foucault, M. (1980) said, *"I don't say that power is everywhere. But I say that there isn't one place where it is not."* Foucault's quote underlines that power does not only focus on certain institutions or individuals, but spreads throughout society in various forms. It shows how individuals perceive and interact with the world around them.

Namor and Shuri are currently conversing in this scene, with close-up shots for each exchange. The use of blue in this scene not only indicates that it is underwater, but it also conveys a sense of calm and relaxation. In comparison to the situation with Nakia (whose color palette is warmer), which is occurring concurrently with the conversation. The blur and lack of detail in the background also draws the viewer's attention to the characters in the scene. The dialog Namor says in this scene is, *"For centuries, the surface nations have conquered and enslaved people like us. Over resources."* This reminds the



viewers that not only Wakanda is threatened for their vibranium, but Talokan too. However, foreigners' desire for both of the country's resources seeks to manipulate its dependence on vibranium in order to control its actions and decisions. This results in external manipulation, which can take the form of military intervention, political influence, or other means. *"It is*

*not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness."* (Marx ,K., 1859). Similarly to Marx's contention that the mode of production shapes various aspects of society, Wakanda and Talokan's reliance on vibranium as a means of production has a significant impact on their entire societal framework. Control over vibranium shapes Wakanda and Talokan's consciousness (like Okoye losing Princess Shuri after going on a mission to protect vibranium), decision-making processes (like Namor wants to terminate the scientist to protect his nation's vibranium), and relationships with other nations (like Talokan's relationship with the US after they try to obtain vibranium from their lands). The essence echoes the dynamics in Wakanda's story, specifically how control over vibranium influences and shapes the nation's entire existence.

In this scene, Shuri makes use of the Heart-Shaped Herb after successfully recreating it, leading her to the Ancestral Plane. There, she initially thinks the one behind the chair is her mother, when it is actually Erik Killmonger. Presented by a *close-shot* and a *tracking shot* on Killmonger, the two begin arguing as the place starts setting on fire, which symbolizes Shuri's anger when the argument becomes more aggressive. The resilient spirit of resistance against the external power grows when Erik Killmonger





argues with T'Calla about defending the weak. Killmonger's goal of changing the distribution of vibranium resources reflects his understanding of how changing the means of production can lead to a shift in existing power structures and influence Wakanda's consciousness. However, in order to do so, he attempts to shift the means of production away

from the ruling elite and more equitably distribute power and resources. This is consistent with Marxist ideas of challenging capitalist control over the means of production, which can be seen when Killmonger appears in the Ancestral Plane. In which he tries to convince Shuri to go against Namor, the external influenced power, and eliminate him at once. That way, not only Wakanda will be peaceful once more, they could also get vibranium from their place too.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the intricate narrative of Wakanda's struggle against external powers for control over its valuable resource, vibranium, serves as a powerful exploration of colonialism, imperialism, and the dynamics of power. The film skillfully weaves together elements of Marxist theory and Foucauldian concepts to reveal neocolonialism amidst the conflict between the domination and the resistance. As exemplified by Queen Ramonda's defiance against sharing vibranium and Shuri's determination to protect her people, the clash between Wakanda and the global elite underscores the tensions between preserving national autonomy and fulfilling global responsibilities. The film also delves into the psychological impact of colonization on the colonized, revealing the complexities of identity and cultural displacement. Through Namor and Shuri's confrontation, the film portrays the significance of leadership, resilience, and the pursuit of justice. Furthermore, the narrative raises essential questions about the ethical responsibilities of advanced nations in humanitarian aid, technological sharing, and the redistribution of resources. The struggle depicted resonates with Marx's assertion that the history of society is a history of class struggles, as the clash between Wakanda and Talokan exemplifies the competition for resources and power caused by the external forces, creating '*division among classes.*' Foucault's idea that power is pervasive but not confined to specific places underscores how external forces seek to manipulate and control vibranium for their own gain. In the end, Wakanda's resistance and determination serve as a beacon of hope, illustrating the potential for transformative change and the importance of preserving cultural integrity in the face of external pressures.

Namor, in his role as the ruler of the underwater, symbolizes the drive to extend the influence and resource capacity of a strong and impressive kingdom or area. His actions could potentially mirror the

characteristics of neocolonialism by seeking to exert control and exploit resources beyond his nation's borders, potentially resulting in an unjust distribution and destabilization of these resources. Meanwhile, Shuri embodies the spirit of resistance against neocolonial pressures through her diligent protection of Wakanda's advanced technology. Her actions show a strong determination to stop outside pressures from acquiring Wakanda's technological progress, thereby preserving the nation's autonomy and preventing the exploitation of its technological breakthroughs. Despite his physical absence, Killmonger's legacy continues to shape the landscape of resistance. His radical vision of leveraging Wakanda's resources to liberate marginalized communities aligns with the goals of resistance, highlighting the potential consequences of neocolonialism, wherein powerful nations may manipulate resources to advance their own ideological agendas. The nation faces the intricate challenge of determining whether to share its resources while navigating the complex issues arising from neocolonial dynamics.

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