FRANCE MILITARY PRESENCE IN AFRICA DURING THE POST-COLONIAL PERIOD (1960-2023): A HISTORICAL SURVEY

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Abstract

The authors of this paper, opined that the presence of France military in some of her former colonies in Africa, has many advantages and disadvantages because her military presence in Africa has exposed the Africa military structures to the world of globalization through local and international trainings. However, according to the word of Late Kwame Nkrumah the first Republic president of Ghana, who described neo-colonialism in Africa as the last stage of imperialism. Consequently, the France military presence in some of her colonies in Africa most especially in the francophone countries such as Niger Republic, Mali, Burkina Faso, Republic of Benin, Senegal, Cote d' Ivoire, Chad and others has led credence to this exploitation de-humanization and pauperization of Africans.Thus, these in-human and ungodly activities of France in her former colonies has make the dependency theory to be germaine to this paper. The authors now concluded that the France military presence in Africa can be described as neo-colonialism, exploitation and underdevelopment of socio-economic and political advancement of Africa in this 21st century. The authors argue further that the French former colonies can only disentangle themselves from these problems if Africa leaders can put their countries in orders.

Keywords: Colonialism, Military, Inhuman, Ungodly, Exploitation, Dependency theory, Neo-colonialism, Human relations, Imperialism.

Research Methodology: Historical Research Methiod (Primary & Secondary Sources). In this studies, the authors used a historical research methods to gather information and evidence to reconstruct the activities of France military presence in her former colonies in Africa. primary sources provided firsthand evidence and original perspectives, while secondary sources offered analysis, context, and interpretation. The authors used both types of sources to build a comprehensive understanding of the past and present activities of France military presence in her former colonies in Africa.

Introduction

It is widely understood that, over a half-century ago, most nations of Africa gained formal independence from colonial powers. What is not widely known is that in former French and Portuguese colonies, France was able to retain a significant degree of control over the economics and politics through a neocolonial system dubbed *la Françafrique*. Under that system, France has made use of the CFA franc, the management of natural resources, and one-sided commercial

contracts to siphon off much of the economic surplus generated by these 23 nations. In addition, France has effectively installed puppet governments in many nations and stifled dissent throughout the continent. Dissent against French domination of Africa has occurred at various times during the long period of *Françafrique*, and has intensified significantly in recent years. Several governments in West Africa are now openly rebelling against France, and diaspora communities and influential individuals are increasingly speaking out to support and interpret this dissent. This paper provides an historical overview of *Françafrique*, reviews its current impacts, and sketches the contours of the growing movement to dismantle it. Furthermore, all the France activities in some of our former colonies were based on deceitful and exploitations of both the human and material resources of these colonies from the era of slave trade to colonialization and modern neo-colonialism.

Conceptual Clarification

Rodney (1972), in his book "how Europe underdeveloped Africa" argues that a combination of "power politics" and "economic exploitation of Africa" "by Europeans led to the poor state of African political and economic development" evident in the late 20th century. Though, he did not intend "to remove the ultimate responsibility for development from the shoulders of Africans... [*He believes that*] every African has a responsibility to understand the [capitalist] system and work for its overthrow." Rodney argues further that to fully appreciate and understand the effect of European exploitation on Africa, four distinct issues need to be addressed: a reconstruction of pre-European Africa's developmental condition, that of pre-expansionist Europe, and their contributions to each other's present condition, developed or otherwise. After an introductory chapter in which he definitionally discusses development, underdevelopment, and associated terminologies in their historical and contemporary contexts, he devotes a chapter to each of these four issues. He concludes the book with a chapter critiquing arguments that promote the "supposed benefit of colonialism". He also explains the means through which colonialism is linked to Africa's present underdevelopment. Consequently, late Nkrumah the first civilian President of Ghana corroborated this Walter Rodney argument when he described neo-colonialism as the last stage of imperialism.

Military Theories

Mahan's Sea Power Theory (Alfred Thayer Mahan): Highlights the significance of Naval power in achieving strategic objectives. Guerrilla Warfare Theory (Mao Zedong): Outlines tactics for asymmetric warfare, using terrain and popular support to wear down a stronger enemy. Just War Theory (St. Augustine and other): Provides ethical guidelines for waging war, including just cause, proportionality, and last resort. Fourth Generation Warfare (4GW): Describes asymmetric, non-state actor conflicts, such as terrorism and insurgency. These theories continue to influence military strategy, doctrine, and operations, often blending and adapting to new contexts and technologies. Therefore, this theory is equally germane in this study because we would be able to realise the motive behind the France military presence in her former colonies in Africa maybe it was genuine or otherwise.

Classical Marxian Theories

Although there does not exist a systematic Marxian theory of development, the theory is implicit in Marx's study of the laws of motion of the capitalist mode of production in his 3 volumes of *Capital*. Marx traces the development of the capitalist mode of production from the pre-capitalist era of feudalism. Capitalism first emerged in Europe and was imposed, often violently, on other regions of the world. Earlier mercantilist forms of outright plunder and violent expropriation of land gave rise to the process of "primitive accumulation". However, Marx argues that the prospects for the development of capitalism crucially depend upon the pre-existing modes of production. He supports this thesis by comparing feudalism with what he describes as the "Asiatic" societies. Whereas the dissolution of feudalism was favourable for the expansion of capitalism in Europe, the opposite is the case in Asia. The reason for this contrast was that feudalism had already developed forms of private ownership, while the Asiatic societies were principally based upon the communal ownership of land. In Europe, the process of primitive accumulation involved the creation of wage labour, which migrated from the rural hinterland to the industrial regions. The eventual triumph of capitalism will depend largely on the historical conditions, which either promote or retard the development of a market economy. Marx also stressed other factors: the influx of precious metals from the "new world", the slave trade and the growth of merchant capital (Braudel, 1984). The original Marxian theory had envisaged that capitalism would eventually become the dominant economic system on a world scale. The dynamic "inner laws" of capital, driven by the profit motive and accumulation, attracts into the

ambit of world trade, all other pre-capitalist societies. Marx's earlier writings on colonialism focused on British colonial policy in India. By the nineteenth century, the British East India company had ceased to be profitable as a solely mercantilist enterprise and became a publicly-listed company. As merchant capital, its role in India was wholly destructive because it failed to create the conditions for the growth of capitalism. As soon as it became a capitalist enterprise, however, it acquired the role of industrial capital and began to sow the seeds of capitalist enterprise in India itself. In other words, Marx argued that the introduction of capitalism in India was a necessary evil. Even though the initial impact of colonial trade was destructive for India, the growth of capitalism would eventually benefit the Indian colony. Furthermore, Marx considers the "Asiatic" mode of production as "pre-historical" in the sense that it had remained in a state of primordial animation and stagnation until contact with European capitalism.

The other major classical Marxian source on the theory of imperialism and underdevelopment is V.I Lenin's *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* and Rudolf Hilferding's *Finance Capital.* Imperialism is simply defined as the "monopoly stage of capitalism" in which finance capital plays a dominant role as it merges with industrial capital. Furthermore, Lenin highlighted the crucial importance of the export of capital, the escalation of rivalries between competing monopolies and the territorial division of the world between the major imperialist powers. Thus, this is the prevalent situation in Africa and other third world countries till today. For almost half a century, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has promised to unite fifteen countries in the region. Eight are former French colonies, but members also include such major English-speaking countries as Nigeria and Ghana, as well as Lusophone Cabo Verde and Guinea-Bissau. ECOWAS even promised a currency union — but the project has continually been delayed. And last Sunday, three states announced that they were leaving ECOWAS for good. The countries in question — Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger — have each had military coups since 2020, with new authorities claiming to break free of "neocolonialism" and the economic structures imposed by former imperial power France. Last August, other ECOWAS states threatened to invade Niger and topple the post-coup government. But the following month, the three states formed a security pact called Alliance of Sahel States (AES in French) — an agreement that Senegalese development economist Ndongo Samba Sylla calls "a mutual defense pact but also a framework for economic and monetary integration." Samba Sylla, author of *Afrca's Last Colonial*

Currency: The CFA Franc Story, has written widely on the French neocolonial presence in West Africa. He is a critic of Senegalese president Macky Sall, who this Saturday called off the country's planned elections indefinitely. He spoke to *Jacobin*'s David Broder about the three states' move to leave ECOWAS, what their claimed assertion of sovereignty involves, and the rival claims of Russian and French meddling in the region.

David Broder wrote that Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger quit ECOWAS, citing both economic sanctions and the lack of support in fighting terrorism. ECOWAS had last summer appeared to be planning an invasion of Niger, as well as imposing trade restrictions, before then seeking a more negotiated path in the name of restoring democracy there. Why are these three governments quitting ECOWAS, and why now? **Ndongo Samba Sylla** (2020) opined that since 2020, six military coups took place in West Africa: two in Mali and Burkina Faso, and one each in Guinea and Niger. The one in Niger, last July, was the most recent. Mohamed Bazoum was said to be its "democratically elected" president, though he was only appointed following a flawed electoral process. He was overthrown by the chief of the presidential guard and is today in custody. Bazoum has still not consented to resigning. West African military coups since 2020. (Creative Commons). In power, Bazoum had partnered with the European Union in the implementation of its draconian migration policies. His reign, according to the US State Department itself, saw a continuation of "unlawful or arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings by or on behalf of government" and "harsh and life-threatening prison conditions." Nonetheless, visiting Niger last March, Antony Blinken described the country as a "model of democracy." Bazoum was also a zealous French ally. Bazoum himself publicly backed the 2021 military coup in Chad. At a joint press conference with [Emmanuel] Macron, speaking next to an approving French president, he said that the security context justified the suspension and violation of the Chadian constitution. He added that reason dictates "taking the gamble" of working with the military. This shocked practically no one, except Chadian people who demonstrated against this illegal move. Many were arrested and killed. Surprised by the putsch against Bazoum last July, Macron criticized his intelligence services and called it "one coup too many." France immediately worked on the diplomatic front to get ECOWAS to launch a military operation to reinstate Bazoum. Senegal, Benin, and Côte d'Ivoire were ready to send troops. Nigerian president Bola Tinubu, who also held the rotating position of ECOWAS president, was on the warmonger's side. When ECOWAS announced its intention to "restore democracy" in Niger by force of arms, the military regimes in Mali, Burkina Faso, and

Guinea declared that any attack on Niger would be an attack on them. While deploring the coup in Niger, Algeria was hostile to any military intervention. Algeria had not forgotten the ongoing chaos created by the destruction of Libya by NATO, the United States, France, and Britain. The United States preferred to negotiate with the new Nigerian authorities, leaving Macron isolated.

In the end, the intervention did not take place. The African peoples were largely hostile to it. Nigeria, the main regional power, did not get the green light from its parliament. The United States preferred to negotiate with the new Nigerien authorities, leaving Macron isolated. However, in place of a military operation, ECOWAS has put in place economic, commercial, and financial sanctions against Niger — ones even more severe than the ones against Mali from January to July 2022. The decision of these three countries to withdraw from ECOWAS is essentially explained by the lack of solidarity on the part of the latter in their fight against jihadist terrorism and separatist groups, and by the imposition of harsh commercial and financial sanctions that are clearly instigated by France and its African allies such as Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, and Senegal. France always tried to sabotage ECOWAS since the mid-1970s through the creation of rival regional organizations. Its capture of ECOWAS can be seen in the nature of the financial sanctions imposed on Mali in 2022 and Niger since the 2023 putsch. No foreign country could order the central bank of a sovereign currency-issuer to prevent the government accessing its bank accounts and the domestic financial system. But this is possible if you use the CFA franc, i.e. you belong to a nominally "African-run" monetary union whose central bank is in fact under the legal tutelage of the French treasury. Hiding behind ECOWAS, France was able to impose these types of sanctions on Mali and Niger, though they have no legal basis. Surviving the sanctions, aimed at collapsing its economy, has psychologically strengthened Mali and its people. The AES countries now realize that they have nothing to lose from exiting a community under imperialist guidance. Despite legitimate worries about their future relationships with their neighbors, significant sections of their populations expressed a feeling of liberation.

David Broder equally said that do you think this will indeed be a lasting split? How would you characterize the future durability of ECOWAS, and its ability to become an economic power and "regional policeman" on security issues? It's hard to say. ECOWAS started out as an economic community. But as time went on, it broadened its remit to include defense and security issues, as

well as "democracy and good governance." There's the problem. As an economic community, notably a regional customs union, ECOWAS has been rendered somewhat obsolete by the implementation of the African continental free trade area (AFCFTA). West African countries no longer necessarily need ECOWAS for the free movement of people and goods across borders. As a bloc, ECOWAS showed little unity when negotiating Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the European Union (EU). While Nigeria rightly opposed the signing of these "free trade" agreements, countries such as Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire preferred to sign interim agreements with the EU, which undermined the momentum for regional and continental trade integration. This lack of common will and unity is also evident in the repeated postponement of the project to introduce a single currency for the fifteen member states. ECOWAS started out as an economic community. But as time went on, it broadened its remit to include defense and security issues. Beyond these aspects, ECOWAS lacks the political legitimacy to play the role of policeman. Critics generally describe it as a union of heads of state who are rarely models of leadership within their own countries and who do not always respect or implement decisions from the ECOWAS judicial court.

How credible is an institution composed of leaders who blithely violate their own constitutions, imprison opponents and activists, use force to kill demonstrators, and organize fraudulent elections? What further damages ECOWAS's credibility and trustworthiness is the popular perception that its unhuman sanctions are orchestrated from the outside. The African peoples want economic integration, but they don't want a subservient and arbitrary ECOWAS. In the event of regime change following elections, other countries could join the AES countries in demanding a new form of regional integration. There has been some discussion of an ECOWAS currency as an alternative to the West African CFA franc, which these three Sahel countries all use. What do you think the recent developments in these countries signal for this project? What chance is there that they will create a common currency of their own, and with what economic effects? The idea of a single currency for ECOWAS dates back to 1983. Its launch has been postponed several times: 2015 then 2020 then 2027. I think we won't be seeing it any time soon. There's two reasons. First, the methodology is inappropriate. Following the launch of the euro in 1999, the ECOWAS "imported" the Maastricht "nominal convergence" criteria — related to public deficits and debts, the inflation rate, etc. These criteria were demanded by Germany in order to dispense with the need for solidarity with its Eurozone neighbors. These criteria have to be met for membership in

the future ECOWAS monetary zone. But for some years, countries have not managed to meet them, for various reasons. Add to this the so-called "gradualist" approach: countries that meet the criteria will take the lead, and will then be joined by the others. An approach that makes no sense: For example, how can one or two small countries be the locomotives of regional monetary integration?

Then there's politics. The eight countries that use the CFA franc have so far preferred to remain under the tutelage of the French treasury, while Nigeria does not seem very interested in exercising regional monetary leadership. This has given Macron the opportunity to attempt to torpedo the ECOWAS monetary integration project.

The eight countries that use the CFA franc have so far preferred to remain under the tutelage of the French treasury. Against this backdrop, ECOWAS's often illegal sanctions hardly create political momentum for monetary unification between fifteen countries. Who wants to be part of a nondemocratic monetary union where the most powerful countries can do as they please?
My own view is that, supposing this project is feasible, it would only be a symbolic alternative to the CFA franc. As it is modelled on the Eurozone, it would generate a "tropical euro" — a currency without a sovereign, an instrument of class warfare.

The three AES countries have announced a plan for economic and monetary integration. We will see how that develops and whether they will get rid of the CFA franc. The recent military takeovers in Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso are often portrayed — including by the new authorities themselves — as an assertion of sovereignty against French neocolonial influence. Is it demagogy, or does it have material effects? And how similar are the three cases, actually Given the horrors of military rule in Africa, especially during the Cold War, some caveats are needed here. Many commentators speculate on a "return" of coups in Africa. They usually explain this situation in terms of absent "good governance," poverty, and any other supposed factors that might seem plausible. I disagree with this approach. There is no "return" of coups. There is rather a long-standing Francophone Africa coup problem. Explanations in terms of "bad governance," poverty, and so on lack specificity. These features can be found in many countries across Africa where government overthrow is a thing of the past (which does not imply that they are "democratic").

Nine coups happened in Africa since 2020: eight in French-speaking countries and/or in a geopolitical context militarized by the West (the French-speaking Sahel countries and Sudan).

One of the "specificities" of military coups in Francophone Africa is that, from an historical perspective, they have been the only means to get rid of facets of French imperialism. This is not to say that military coups are inherently progressive. Not at all. Most of them have been reactionary and worked to further cement the neocolonial order. But, given the French grip on the "choice" of African leaders, and its long-term success in crushing the civilian left, the rare leaders who had a project to break from French neocolonialism came from the military. We might think for example of charismatic and honest leaders like Thomas Sankara in Burkina Faso. This is a two-centuries-long history that my coauthor Fanny Pigeaud and I cover on our latest book. The recent period in French-speaking Africa is marked by the "return" of practices from the era of single-party rule. Incumbents increasingly allow themselves to rig elections by choosing their own opponents, manipulating constitutional norms and laws, pressurizing the judiciary, and deploying an unprecedented level of violence against their own populations — all of this with the complicity of the "international community," which equates "democracy" with neocolonial servitude and the implementation of the neoliberal agenda. The recent period in French-speaking Africa is marked by the return of practices from the era of single-party rule.
The circumstances that led to the recent coups are different from one country to another. So is their political "profile." While some putsches allow French neocolonialism to reorganize and to prevent an undesirable regime change (like in Gabon and in Chad), the bloodless putsches in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger are clearly opposed to so-called Françafrique.

In Niger specifically, my feeling is that it was initially a palace coup, but it quickly took an anti-imperialist turn in the face of widespread popular support boosted by the immediacy and harshness of the sanctions imposed by ECOWAS and the "international community." The Niger putschists certainly couldn't have imagined the huge popularity of their coup. This is highly revealing of the disconnect that usually exists between the political class and the ordinary people thirsting for radical change. Against a backdrop of strained diplomatic relations, French troops were expelled from these three countries. By contrast, in Gabon and Chad, two bastions of French influence, the putschists were endorsed by Paris and the "international community." In their case, there were no

real economic or financial sanctions. French troops are present and French economic interests are unthreatened. Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso are landlocked and impoverished countries with a large surface area. Even if they express the will to conquer more sovereignty, they won't be able to do it alone. Debt servicing is not as high as in other African countries. But transfers of profits and dividends are substantial, a reality that is usually coupled with the theft and transfer abroad of resources. A more "self-centered" economic strategy — progress in food production, greater control over the financial and extractive sectors, etc. — within a framework of economic integration, which would help to relieve their balance of payments of high transport costs, seems unavoidable in their case. In the face of climate and security challenges, transfers of resources will be essential in addition to domestic efforts. The Sahel clearly needs a "Marshall Plan." Two months ago, the new authorities in Niger cancelled the 2015 agreement with the EU on restraining migration, similar to a number of such deals now being touted by Giorgia Meloni with various (often heavily indebted) North African and Sahel countries in exchange for development aid. What do you think the Nigerien authorities are looking for? And what does this have to tell us about how other states may negotiate their role as outsourced border police for Europe? Ndongo Samba Sylla (2022) argued further that policy move is a way for the Niger government to assert its "newfound" sovereignty in the face of the EU, whose inhumane migration policies often contravene the principle of freedom of movement within the ECOWAS zone. It's also a way of getting rid of an unpopular measure. The Niger authorities are therefore sending a message to the EU: political-diplomatic relations, particularly in the field of migration, will no longer be the same; more balanced and respectful partnerships are needed. It remains to be seen whether the AES countries will develop a concerted response on this point. Even if these states express the will to conquer more sovereignty, they won't be able to do it alone. Often, despite their differences, all three states are said to be turning to Russia for "security aid" — notably due to the Wagner presence in Mali. How real is this?

Providing security services has been Russia's comparative advantage in Africa, particularly in its French-speaking part. Russian influence on the continent is often singled out in the West. But the Western mainstream narrative usually omits to say that Russia, including the Wagner Group, has helped and is helping countries like the Central African Republic and Mali to reestablish their territorial unity, where France (including private French security groups) has failed. In Mali,

France has been present since 2013. Its results on the front of the fight against jihadism have been more than mixed. French troops have gradually been perceived by the population as occupying forces. Prior to the arrival of the military in power, the "democratically elected" government in Mali could rarely deploy its troops in its own airspace, for lack of authorization from France! Following the departure of French and MINUSMA (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali) troops, the military regime succeeded in retaking Kidal, a town that France had left in the hands of separatist groups. Even if security challenges persist, all these countries, thanks to military cooperation with countries from the Global South and Russia, are better equipped and their armies better trained. As the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute points out, in the face of France and the United States' reluctance to sell arms to Mali, Russia has become its leading supplier. The West may be at loggerheads with Russia. But they can't blame the African countries they've let down for looking for partners to help cope with the security problems that Western military interventions have themselves helped to create. We are also interested in how you read US policy toward Niger — for instance, the visit by Deputy Secretary of State Victoria Nuland last August, the fact that Washington has not formally spoken of a "coup," and its strong military ties. Washington has been more diplomatically astute than warmongering Paris. At one point, the United States supported Bazoum's return to power, before quickly negotiating with the military regime without referring to the situation as a "coup." It was indeed a coup. But recognizing it as such would have forced the United States to leave Niger, a country where they operate a drone base and have troops on the ground. Though negotiations were said to be "difficult" between Nuland and the new regime, they must certainly have been facilitated by the fact that the USA trained the new chief of the Nigerien army, one of "America's favourite generals." But let there be no mistake. The United States is not in Niger to help the country meet its security challenges. Their motivation is essentially imperialist: to block the path of its competitors, notably Russia and China (and even France!), and to keep an eye on their allies on the continent. The Western militarization of Africa has been a breeding ground for political instability and the emergence of military regimes. As a reaction, the pan-Africanist and popular uprising that started in the Sahelian epicenter now threatens to engulf neighboring neocolonial regimes labelled "democracies."

How France Has Continued Exploiting Its Former African Colonies

The French army's forced exit from Niger has been wistfully termed the end of an era of great-power status. We should remember what this really meant: a zombie empire that crushed democracy in order to protect French elites' power, both in Africa and at home. French troops withdraw from Niamey, Niger, on October 10, 2023. (Balima Boureima / Anadolu via Getty

France, it seems, is leaving Africa. At least that was the news last month when France began pulling its 1, 400 soldiers out of Niger. Similar events across Africa's so-called junta belt have garnered extensive attention recently. While commentators in publications like *Foreign policy and Time* have trotted out tired Cold War–era binaries, others have focused on the legitimate grievances that have led citizens in countries like Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea, and Niger to seek new governments. Mbaye Bashir Lo, professor at Duke University, captured this spirit well when he declared, "Nothing good comes from France." However, lost in many of these discussions is a more international, and specifically intercontinental, struggle. French politicians, business leaders, and generals have not only supported kleptocratic and antidemocratic governments in Africa. They have also done so in France itself. To prove this point, one need only look at another set of headlines. French news readers have become accustomed to the name Vincent Bolloré. The ultraconservative billionaire, head of the Bolloré Group, is best known as a major backer of the French far right. Bollore's conservative media empire, which includes CNews, often described as France's answer to Fox, has amplified reactionary politics for years. Last year, it provided a major platform to the pro-fascist presidential candidacy of Éric Zemmour. What commentaries often ignore, however, is the fact that Bolloré's ability to finance this far-right media ecosystem stems in no small part from his vast holdings across West and Central Africa.

The same day French soldiers began leaving Niger, a court in the French city of Nanterre ordered the Bolloré Group to pay €145,000 to 145 residents who live near its vast Cameroonian palm oil plantations. The judge condemned the group for recklessly polluting rivers across Cameroon for years. Like other members of France's business elite Bolloré has reaped billions in profits from neocolonial and environmentally destructive industries across Africa. Since the 1980s, Bolloré has turned his father's once struggling paper company around by drastically lowering workers' pay and diversifying its portfolio, most notably by purchasing transportation infrastructure across the African coast. While in the last few years Bolloré's company has begun selling off many of its assets in Africa, the profits gained from them have long allowed him to buy

up and radicalize media outlets across France. So when pundits speak about a fall of French power in Africa, we should ask who this power has served and whose dreams it has crushed. By the start of the twentieth century, France had violently conquered a huge empire in Africa. It laid claim to almost the entire northwestern quarter of the continent, vast swaths of Central Africa, and islands across the Indian Ocean. In order to control this vast empire, French colonial officials massacred civilians in North Africa, forced hundreds of thousands of West and Central African men into forced labor, and shot down liberation fighters in Madagascar. By the 1950s, however, France's empire seemed to be fraying. By 1958, France had lost its colonies in Southeast Asia and was struggling to contain a powerful liberation movement in its prize colony, Algeria. In this context, the wartime leader General Charles de Gaulle stepped in to "save" the Republic. While de Gaulle led the Free French forces in World War II, he had a distinct idea of what freedom meant. After France's liberation, de Gaulle pushed for a new constitution that would give the executive massive power. Wary of creating another dictator, France's political class and voters rejected the general's vision. In response, de Gaulle stormed off the French political scene in 1946. Twelve years later, though, he returned.

Amid the escalating Algerian War, a military revolt known as the May 1958 Crisis brought de Gaulle back to power. Many leaders in France's military had grown frustrated with France's elected government, feeling that these politicians were not sufficiently defending French Algeria. To solve this problem, they decided to take power themselves and place the still extremely influential and popular de Gaulle at the nation's helm, a reminder that military power-grabs are far from an African political pathology. To upend France's parliamentary government, de Gaulle successfully pushed for a new Fifth Republic that centered power in the president rather than the National Assembly. Emblematic of this reform was Article 49.3, which allowed the president to force through legislation without a vote in the National Assembly. Today, facing massive popular resistance since the Yellow Vest movement, President Emmanuel Macron has made this article key to pushing draconian neoliberal reforms against overwhelming popular opposition. De Gaulle's dream of an almost monarchical president survives. De Gaulle and his allies integrated this authoritarian vision into France's crumbling empire. By 1960, most of France's sub-Saharan African colonies had gained independence. Yet this did not mean France had left the continent. De Gaulle, and his successors, supported more capitalist-friendly allies like presidents Léopold

Senghor of Senegal and Félix Houphouët-Boigny of Cote d'Ivoire. Meanwhile, France punished enemies like the socialist Sékou Totimeuré of Guinea. Punishment often meant backing violent coups. During the 1960s, France backed military coups against elected leaders in Mali, to name a few. French flags had fallen, but the militaries that hoisted them remained.

The military was only part of this neocolonial relationship. By the 1960s, colonization had become "cooperation." Politicians applied this deceptively supportive title to an array of economic, political, and cultural programs across France's former African colonies that supported French influence. Schools, ports, and banks continued to serve French political and economic interests. This was most notable in the CFA franc, a colonial-era currency initially pegged to the French franc and now the euro, still used across France's former colonies in Western and Central Africa. As the economist Ndongo Samba Sylla and journalist Fanny Pigeaud point out, countries using this currency have to place a significant portion of their foreign exchange reserves in a special French treasury account, allowing the French government to maintain significant influence over these countries' treasuries. As protesters across Francophone Africa have called out recently, this currency is a potent tool and symbol of neocolonial French exploitation. Yet this persistence did not come through French domination alone. From managers at French-owned gold mines in Senegal to generals in the Chadian army, African elites have worked alongside French counterparts to protect their shared interests. Antidemocratic authorities and business leaders in France and Francophone Africa alike have joined forces to defend what critics have decried as an "Empire that does not want to die." This zombie empire even has its own name: *Françafrique*. It did not take long for these governments to face challenges of their own. In 1968, millions of students and workers across France rose up against de Gaulle's administration, comparing the general to the very fascist force he claimed to have defeated decades earlier. Many protesters also decried the rising exploitation of France's postcolonial migrant workers. That same year, similar strikes arose in Senegal to oppose President Senghor's autocratic state. Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, similar uprisings erupted in the Republic of the Congo, Tunisia, Madagascar, and elsewhere. Across the remnants of France's empire, students, workers, and radical militants decried elites that had destroyed the dreams of liberation and decolonization alike.

Living and Leaving *Françafrique*

Yet *Françafrique* survived. French multinationals took over uranium mines in Niger, plantations in Cameroon and oil refineries. Meanwhile, France's military intervened in at last sixteen different African countries between 1960 and 1991 to defend allies and protect strategic interests. In recent years, it has become a rite of passage for new French presidents to declare the end of *Françafrique*. Yet as soon as these declarations are made, these same presidents use whatever means they can to defend French political and economic power across the region. Many French citizens unknowingly rely on the rapacious neocolonial industries. Nigerian uranium mines have long fueled France's massive nuclear power plants. Meanwhile, mine workers and local communities live with the deadly consequences. Gas stations across France pump Mali oil into their cars, sending riches to French executives and, until a recent coup, the coffers of the country's long-ruling Bongo family. Similar dynamics play out across France's former colonies. Extractive industries destroy landscapes and livelihoods, pushing millions to find new ways to sustain themselves and their communities. These same industries fuel France's own reactionary politics. During a trip to Senegal in 2022, Marine Le Pen visited West Africa's largest rice mill and a sugar company that is Senegal's largest private employer, both French-owned, to celebrate what she called "authentic Euro-African co-development." Figures like Le Pen use these multinationals and the "co-development" they promise to demonstrate French global influence. In doing so, they invoke a neocolonial obsession with defending France's "grandeur," all while prioritizing industrial profits over French citizens' everyday needs. As symbols and financiers, French multinationals in Africa thus fuel right-wing forces in France itself. Meanwhile, these multinationals cause economic and environmental crises that push hundreds of thousands of people toward Europe's shores. In response, the French government has joined its European partners to shut the continent's borders. All the while right-wing pundits at stations like CNews, funded by the very neocolonial industries behind many of these migratory crises, pit French citizens against migrant workers. Neocolonialism thus fuels feeds a vicious cycle of social, political, and economic erosion on both sides of the Mediterranean. People have not taken this sitting down. In France and across Francophone Africa, activists have risen up against unresponsive governments and the destructive multinationals they support. In 2018, protesters in Senegal's capital of Dakar smashed windows of grocery stores owned by the powerful French multinational Auchan. Protesters deplored

France's ongoing economic power, particularly in the realm of food production and distribution. A few years later in central France, French activists launched a similarly militant protest against France's agricultural industries. Hundreds of environmentalists clashed with police to stop a huge water reserve that would send water in an increasingly drought-stricken region to rapacious agricultural industries. While fighting against different problems in different places, these protesters shared a desire to challenge environmentally destructive French companies that have exploited millions in Africa and Europe alike.

Some movements highlight these struggles' connections. Rural French activists with the group Sustainable Agriculture and Migrant Seasonal Workers have worked alongside labor migrant groups for years to improve their working conditions. As the farmer Nicolas Duntze put it, they are trying to make sure France's "rura; fields don't become experiments in social erosion." These converging protests are part of France and Africa's entangled history. For all that divides the people of France and its former African colonies, they share the right to an economy and government that does not turn public goods into private interests. Yet for decades, destructive industries and the politicians who defend them have stood in the way of this dream. It is unclear if new military governments have the means, or will, to change this dynamic in the Sahel. The economic, political, and environmental crises they face are immense. But as protesters have made clear, many people want to face them without France's soldiers or businesses. As French troops leave Niger and neocolonial multinationals help fund France's right-wing drift, a new era may emerge. We should not think of this period as one that pits the French against Africans but as one that pits citizens against billionaires. This change represents an opportunity to challenge a decades-old system that defends autocrats and industrialists across continental borders. True democracy demands embracing international solidarity and fighting for the egalitarian world people imagined the first time France's African empire seemed to crumble. The France, have bases in the capital, N'Djamena, Abeche in the east and a detachment in Faya in the north. Djibouti: home to the biggest contingent. At the moment 1,500 soldiers are there under deals from 1977, when the country gained independence. Seeking to expand their influence beyond Algeria the French established protectorates to the east and west of it. The French protectorate of Tunisia was established in 1881 following a swift military invasion, and the French protectorate in Morocco in 1912, following a prolonged military campaign.

French Involvement in West Africa

As the French pursued their part in the scramble for Africa in the 1880s and 1890s, they conquered large inland areas, and at first, ruled them as either a part of the Senegal colony or as independent entities. These conquered areas were usually governed by French army officers, and dubbed "military territories". Until the coup, Nigeria had remained a key security partner of France and the United State, which use it as a base ro help in the regional fight with groups linked to Al Qaeda and Islamic State that have killed thousands and displaced millions across the Sahel and beyond. Furthermore, the French military presence in North Africa was also driven by geopolitical considerations. It provided France with a foothold in the Mediterranean region and allowed them to project their influence and power in wilder context of European and global politics.

The French Army of North Africa

The Army of Africa French was an unofficial but common used term for those portions of the French Army stationed in French North Africa (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia) from 1830 until the end of the Algeria War in 1962, including units made up of indigenous recruits. The French conquest of Algeria began in 1830 with the invasion of Algiers, and was mostly completed by 1852. Not until 1903 was the conquest fully complete. French colonization of Algeria was undertaking through military conquest and the overthrow of existing structures of government. French West Africa, administrative grouping under French rule from 1895 until 1958 of the former French territories of West Africa Senegal, French Sudan, the Ivory Coast, and the French Sudan, to which Dahomey (Benin) was added in 1899. The French goal of increasing their stake in West Africa was influenced by similar policies undertaken by their fellow Europeans in Africa culminating in the late nineteenth century with a European "scramble for Africa". Industrialization and economic conditions in Europe influenced the expansion of European interests. French West Africa was a federation of eight French colonial territories in Africa: Mauritania, Senegal, French Sudan (now Mali), French Guinea (now Guinea), Cote d'Ivoire, Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), Dahomey (now Benin), and Niger.

Samori Toure

Warrior king, empire builder and hero of the resistance against the French colonization of West Africa during the 19th century, Samori Toure was born around 1830 in the Milo River Valley in present day Guinea. The primary objective of the Allied landings was to secure bridgeheads for opening a second front to the near of German and Italian forces battling the British in Libya and Egypt. However, resistance by the nominally neutral or potentially pro-German Vichy French forces needed to be overcome first. The two countries are like linked through many agreements, in the areas of cultural, legal and defense cooperation. There is much high level contract between political leaders and regular bilateral visits. While figures vary, it can be estimated that 545 240 colonized troops were mobilized, around 437 500 of which were sent to Europe. Algeria and French West Africa (AOF) were the imperial territories that provided the most men. Why did some Vichy French fight the Allied landings in North Africa during Operation Torch? Because, as soldiers, they were fighting to support the legitimate (in a sense) government of France of the time. The one they swore to defend and protect. Today, French military doctrine is based on the concepts of national independence, nuclear deterrence (see Force de dissuasion), and military self-sufficiency. France is a charter member of NATO, and has worked actively with its allies to adapt NATO-- internally and externally-- to the post-cold War environment. In return, Darlan ordered all French forces in North Africa to cease resistance to the Allies and to cooperate instead. The deal was made on 10 November, and French resistance ceased almost at once. The French troops in North Africa who were not already captured submitted to and eventually joined the Allied forces. Macron last year withdrew French troops from Mali following tensions with the ruling junta after a 2020 coup, and more recently from Burkina Faso, for similar reasons. Both African countries had asked for the French forces to leave. In 1939, Senghor was enlisted in the 3rd Colonial Infantry Regiment of the French army with the rank of private (2^{e} Class) despite its higher education. A year later in June 1940, the invading Germans took him prisoner in la Charite-sur-Loire or Vilabon.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

First on the list of French speaking countries in Africa is the DRC. The DRC has French as their official language which is used in governmental and educational operations. They have a population of 77 millions and 51% of the population can speak French. The native units serving in

the French colonial army (known from 1900 onwards as the "Troupes Coloniales", or just "La Coloniale") were comprised of tiralileurs (sharpshooters) recruited throughout France's overseas empire.

In conclusion,

France bitterly resented its loss in the Seven Years' War and sought revenge. It also wanted to strategically weaken Britain. Following the Declaration of Independence, the American Revolution was well received by both the general population and the aristocracy in France. During the 18th and 19th century, North Africa was colonized by France, the United Kingdom, Spain and Italy. North Africa was colonized by European bowers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The process of colonization began with the invasion and annexation of parts of Algeria by the French in 1830, and was followed by the colonization of Tunisia in 1881, and Egypt in 1882. There are an estimated 1.5 - 2 million Berber speakers in France, including Kabyle (1 million), Chleuh (0.5 million), rifain (300,000) and Chaoui (200,000). The majority live in cities, especially Paris. The period of formal colonial rule in French West Africa (FWA) was remarkably short. The Government-General, which established the same work for civilian rule in the colony, was setup over a period of nine years from 1895 to 1904. By 1960, all the colonial territories in FWA had gained their independence. The wave of independence that rocked the African continent during the early sixties dismantled the French colonial empire to a large extent. In spite of the de-colonization, however, France's influence over its former colonies began to manifest itself in a new manner. To protect its interests, France opted to instituitionalize its relationship with its former colonies by signing comprehensive bilateral economic, political, military and cultural accords with them. Such a policy became an affective weapon that guaranteed the French re-entry into he portals of independent Africa and France to give continuity to the rapport with its colonies. Most of the leaders in French Africa, such as Houphouet Boigny (IvoryCoast), Senghor (Senegal), Hamani Diori (Niger), Daddah (Mauritania), Ahidjo (Cameroon), Leon M'Ba (Gabon), who assumed power after independence were groomed in French colonial traditions. Instead of sapping the ties with the ex-colonial Power, they found it advantageous to seek French co-operation to serve their national interests. Thus, with the exception of Guinea which stepped out of the French orbit in 1958, most of the states from the former French Africa in the Sub-Saharan Africa followed French leadership. The magnitude of French interests in Africa, as also the influence that Franc3e has been

able to exercise over its former colonies, has prompted some observers to view the French policies as neo-colonial. Before proceeding further, a definition of the term "neo-colonialism" is essential, since a loose use of the term runs the risk of masking its implications. Neo-colonialism is plainly a new form of classical colonialism. In essence, it is concerned with the policies followed by the ex-colonial Powers in their relations with the former colonies that achieved independent statehood. By such policies, the ex-colonial Powers try to maintain, perpetuate and re-establish an amount of control over their former colonies, generally by tying economic and political strings. Thus, the new states enjoy formal political sovereignty, but with a considerable degree of economic dependence on the former metropolitan Power. The concept of neo-colonialism is essentially based on the idea that the termination of colonial rule has not necessarily put an end to the exploitation of the developing countries. Among the African leaders, Kwame Nkrumah, a pan-Africanist visionary from Ghana, analyzed the phenomenon of neo-colonialism in two of his major works--*Neo-Colonialism*: The Highest Stage of Imperialism and Africa Must Unite. These two works might not have handled the theme with a sophisticated theoretical sweep, but they certainly highlight the neo-colonial tie-ups, as also the efforts of radical state to liquidate them. Thus, the dependency theory is germane to the French military presence in Africa because their presence connotes socio-economic and political exploitation of both the capital and human resources to certified her socio-economic and political of their country. Thus, their military presence should be totally eliminated in Africa because it would leads to second slavery and obnoxious neo-colonialism. The authors also recommended that Africa leaders should wake up from their slumbering and fast-track the socio-economic, political and military developments in Africa continent or else they would continued to be depending on their former colonial masters for their development and industrialization.

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