

Innovations

Resurging Military Interventions in Francophone West and Central African Countries: Between Re-colonial Rhetoric and Flagrant Civilian Misrule

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Abstract

The recent resurgence of military interventions in the West and Central African sub-regions calls for scholarly interrogation. There are similar patterns among the five countries: Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, the Republic of Niger and Gabon. All five countries are former French Colonies that still retain strong affinities with the erstwhile colonial master. More significant are the allegations of France's overbearing meddling in the internal affairs of these countries (which has been labeled as re-colonialism), and the failure of internal democratic governance to deliver democratic dividends. This article concerns itself with the task of examining the salient issues around the military interventions in those countries and raised the following questions: were the coups a protest against France's alleged interferences in the internal affairs of those countries? Were they crass protests against flagrant internal misrule? Or do those coups revalidate the contagious-effect-thesis of military intervention? This article answers these questions through the qualitative research approach. A conceptual framework was woven around the neo-colonial/re-colonial thesis, while salient indicators were used to gauge the performance of democratic governance in the coup-affected states.

Keywords: Resurging military intervention; Francophone West and Central Africa; Re-colonialism; Anti-colonial rhetoric; flagrant internal misrule.

Introduction

Despite a wave of political independence in the 1960s by African countries, the perpetual exploitation of African States by erstwhile colonial masters, particularly the French government continued afterward. This has made some of the countries earlier colonized by France to live in perpetual poverty, underdevelopment, and without consideration for industrial development. Although France encouraged the development of agriculture and mining during colonialism and till the present which aided raw materials for their industries at the expense of industrialization, France frowns at government intervention in industrialization. The fourteen countries including Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger Republic, Gabon, Chad, and Guinea colonized by France despite efforts of their government to industrialize, their economies are still today tied to the apron string of France (Fadaye, 2004). Past attempts to reverse such re-colonial narratives have ended either in the assassination of revolutionary leaders or the overthrow of their regimes and governments.

In particular, the revolutionary-anti-colonial government of Captain Thomas Sankara known for its vehement opposition and reversal of France's colonial vestige in Burkina Faso was abruptly ended through the assassination of Sankara in 1987. Haller (2023) captured that Sankara initiated policies and programmes to permanently eliminate the abject poverty and economic subservience occasioned by colonial repression and post-colonial influence and interference.

The foregoing, coupled with the failure of democratic governance to deliver the desired good has over the years prompted political unrest, culminating in conflicts, wars, civil strife, and military takeovers. The recent military coups in Francophone African countries (2020-2023) have called for scholarly interrogations amidst rising discontent of the people on democratic government and France's overbearing foreign policy infamously called *La politique de cooperation*. The policy, which stems from an imperialist standpoint, allowed the French government to maintain military advantage in former colonies despite political independence, and to reserve its superiority in Francophone Africa as it obtained before political independence (Ololade, 2008; Cazeneuve, 1998).

The attendant implication of such a misnomer was evident in the massive support received by the coup plotters from the citizens of those countries, and the discontent expressed against the democratic governments (particularly in the case of Niger) describing them as appendages of the West. The situation especially the observable similarities in the coups have called for scholarly interrogation with the view of establishing the causes of the coup pandemic. Although scholarly works, especially Kolawole (2006) have argued that the success of a coup in one country could be a catalyst for coups in neighbouring countries, as observed in the coups in Nigeria and Ghana in 1966 and 1979, these recent cases appear novel and call for interrogation.

To this end, the paper concerns itself with the task of answering the following questions: were the coups a protest against France's alleged interferences in the internal affairs of those countries? Were they crass protests against internal flagrant misrule? Or were these coups a re-validation of the contagious effects of military rule? A conceptual framework is woven around the neo-colonial/re-colonial thesis, while salient indicators such as the economy, poverty reduction, democratic credibility and good governance indicators were used to gauge the performance of democratic governance in the coup-affected states.

Conceptual Framework: Neo-colonialism (Re-colonialism) and Internal Discontent

Several debates have emerged on the nature of African states in response to the historical trajectories, socio-cultural dynamics, and political-economic happenings in the continents. Masahisa Kabawata (2006 - "An Overview of the Debates on the African State"); Jeffrey Herbst (2000 - *State and Power in Africa*); Alex Thompson (2000 - *African Politics*); Jackson & Rosberg ("Why Africa's Weak States Persist" 1982); Kohli (*Personal Rule in Black Africa* - 1986); Young (*Ideology and Development in Africa* 1982) and other notable scholars have all at one point or the other advanced their thoughts on Africa. According to Kabawata (2006), serious research started in the early 1980s as a result of new research trends in Europe and the US, a debate between international financial institutions and various African governments regarding the role of the state in economic development, and the state's retrogression brought on by escalating conflicts. The aftermath of such intellectual contradictions and dialectics has produced fascinating theories and conceptual models, such as neo-colonialism, re-colonialism, and the soft state thesis. Within this context, a conceptual framework is woven around neo-colonialism.

In general, the word 'neocolonialism' refers to the practices and artifacts of specific remnants and colonial-era agencies within a particular nation. Practically speaking, and based on bits of data from Africa, there are still evident and indisputable remnants of colonialism that, despite political independence, affect and guide the course of policies in former colonies (Afisi, 2009). policies on those colonies (Sartre, 1964). Neo-colonialism has since continued to be widely used in African political theory. The word 'neo-colonialism' was first used in

writing in 1964. Jean-Paul Sartre is credited with coining the term, having argued for its immediate disengagement from French rule over its former colonies and complete emancipation from the ongoing impact of French policies on them in his book *Colonialism and Neocolonialism* (Sartre, 1964). Since then, the term has been widely used in African political theory.

However, the All-African People's Conferences (AAPC), a movement of political groupings from African nations under colonial authority, used neo-colonialism for the first time on the continent when they convened conferences in Accra, Ghana, in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Afifi, 2009). Neocolonialism is defined as the intentional and ongoing maintenance of the colonial system in sovereign African states through the subjugation of these states to political, psychological, economic, social, military, and technical forms of dominance through deceptive and covert tactics that eschewed overt acts of violence. It must be noted that it was Kwame Nkrumah's book *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* that expanded the meaning and workings of neo-colonialism. In the opening chapter of his book, Nkrumah unequivocally narrated that

The neo-colonialism of today represents imperialism in its final and perhaps its most dangerous stage. In the past it was possible to convert a country upon which a neo-colonial regime had been imposed — Egypt in the nineteenth century is an example — into a colonial territory. Today this process is no longer feasible. Old-fashioned colonialism is by no means entirely abolished. It still constitutes an African problem, but it is everywhere on the retreat. Once a territory has become nominally independent it is no longer possible, as it was in the last century, to reverse the process. Existing colonies may linger on, but no new colonies will be created. In place of colonialism as the main instrument of imperialism, we have today neo-colonialism. The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State that is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality, its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside (Nkrumah, 1965, p. 1)

Kabawata frames the preceding information, pointing out that while African countries have attained political independence, it is merely symbolic and incomplete. He emphasized that "African countries have been kept in a continuing colonialist situation and have not been able to achieve economic independence due to the maintained colonial economic structures" (Kabawata, 2006, p. 5). Mafeje in Gutkind & Waterman (1977) offered a concise account of the propagation of the neo-colonialist ideology in a seminal study. Formally autonomous nations are easily transformed into neo-colonies by international financial capital due to the instability of their economic frameworks.

In recent discourse, about Africa's socioeconomic and political trajectories, it is evident that erstwhile colonial masters and world capitalist institutions have had overarching although covert influence on the continent. The fragment of colonial economic arrangements, overbearing political influences (under different blocs such as the Commonwealth of Nations), the situating of ex-Africa colonies into the periphery of the world's capitalist system, and the unequal balance of trade has sustained the neo-colonialist ideology in Africa. African coup-plotters or rather revolutionists, such as Thomas Sankara and Murtala Mohammed have berated the overbearing influence of former colonial lords in the internal affairs of their ex-subjects. For the latter, he remarked that "Africa has come of age and is no longer in the orbit of any country however powerful... Its destiny is in its hands to either make or mar" (Mohammed, 1976). Unfortunately, he was assassinated in an alleged West-sponsored coup, likewise Sankara. Kim Haller remarked that "of all African leaders, past and present, it is perhaps Burkina Faso's Thomas Sankara who fought most bravely and boldly against the disabling and often deadly consequences of Western domination" (Haller, 2023, p. 2). Articulating the views of Leo Zeilig, Haller posited that a pattern that Sankara promised to break was economic devastation and the largely unreformed relationships of African states with former colonial powers (Haller, 2023). Thus, Sankara

offered a different kind of freedom and refused to accept that poverty in West Africa was inevitable. In a similar vein, the ostensible highhandedness of the Buhari-led junta in Nigeria (December 31, 1983 – August 27, 1985), and particularly the IMF stalemate was cited by his successor as reasons for the military takeover.

Such overbearing political-economic stances were more prominent in former French colonies (Sarte, 1964). This is validated by the mammoth receptions, which greeted coup plotters in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Gabon. It is important to note that, France has perpetuated its hegemony in its former African colonies through its policy of *la politique de coopération*. *La coopération* has over the years become the tool of French foreign policy of maintaining peace at the same time, exploiting African countries' economies. The policy permitted the French government to maintain military advantage in former colonies despite political independence (Oloade, 2008). Of note, the policy reserved the superiority that France had enjoyed in Francophone Africa before their independence (Oloade, 2008; Cazeneuve, 1998). At the same time, the reception of coup plotters in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger mirrors the people's dissatisfaction in democratic government.

Coups in Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Niger and Gabon: Causes and Matters Arising

The recent plague of the military coups in the former French colonies between 2020 and 2023 called for retrospection to the threshold of military coups in the 1960s, 1970s, and 2010s in Africa, especially in Mali, Togo, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Niger, Guinea, and Gabon. There are several justifications for the returns of the military coups to the African countries especially the former French colonies that experienced the first military coups in the 1960s (Niger & Mali) and returned to Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Niger Republic, and Gabon in the past months. The mindless coup plotters believed that the military government was highly structured to purify the misdemeanors of the civilian administration.

According to Kolawole (2008), the military trusted that the organisation structure is well nurtured and disciplined to bring sanity, clean the dirtiness, and profess stability to the damning economy. Although, the audacious receptions of the military coups by the citizens of Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Gabon, and the Niger Republic signified that the military rule could bring necessary development, revolutionize the economy and cut ties with French neocolonialism in Africa. According to Bolhken (2009), the possibility of a coup d'état may serve as a more potent disincentive to unchecked instances of corruption, rent-seeking, and spending money beyond budget than democratic elections do. Despite a third wave of democratization that swept the continent, Africa is still marked by a high degree of unconsolidated democracy, hybrid democracy, civil autocracy, and military dictatorship (Kolawole, 2008).

Democratic authoritarian regimes, for instance, rely on a fictitious political pluralism in which authority is distributed among certain groups that ensure the regime's security and support. However, Mali saw two distinct coups on August 18, 2020, and May 24, 2021: the first saw the resignation of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita and his government, while the second was the removal of President Bah N'daw by Vice President Assimi Goita. Additionally, a coup on September 30, 2022, removed Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba as acting president due to Captain Traore's purported incapacity to handle the nation's Islamic insurgency. Captain Traore was unanimously chosen as the next president. Apart from that, on January 24, 2022, a military coup resulted in the ouster of President Roch Marc Christian Kabore in Burkina Faso (Jawo, 2022).

For example, democratic authoritarian systems are based on a non-existent political pluralism where power is shared between some organizations that guarantee support and security to the regime. However, in 18 August 2020 and 24 May 2021, Mali experienced two different coups, first the resignation of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita and its cabinet and that of President Bah N'daw ousted by Vice President, Assimi Goita respectively. Also, on 30th September 2022, a coup ousted interim President Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba over

alleged inability to deal with the country's Islamic insurgency by Captain Traore was unanimously designated as the president. This is aside from the military coup that took place in Burkina Faso on January 24th, 2022 that saw to the overthrow of President Roch Marc Christian Kabore (Jawo, 2022).

There is a need to talk of the resurgence of military rule in Africa as Ogude (2012) attributed this to the non-entrenchment of democracy in some African countries and the infestation of seat-tight syndrome by the democratic leader. Even most of the incumbents democratically elected leaders in African countries wanted to remain in power by subverting the democratic processes to favour themselves causing instability, electoral malpractices, and poor governance and creating the condition for coup de tat (Ogunde, 2012). To say that democracy in most African countries is still emerging with a high threshold of continuing maladministration and immaturity, the mechanism of the voting system is restrictive and disenfranchises the populace, the party system is collegial. The democratic government is loosely practiced as authoritarian pluralism wherein power is shared between the few collegial elites (it is not far from the oligarchy but practiced as the democratic government in Africa). Even though the power is shared, the security personnel are compromised by both military and civilian sycophants.

For instance, the incessant coups in Mali signified the corrupt tendencies and compromising model of the military in politics. Between 2012 and 2023, Mali's armed forces had struck the democratic government three times and the military is using the non-resistance model to stay in power. As opined by Obasanjo (2003) that the military could not turn a deaf ear to the misdemeanor of the civilian government, Acemoglu et al (2010) succinctly corroborated this opinion that the military becomes a guardian angel to safeguard the territorial integrity and collapse status of the state, the coup d' etat was seeing as a risk factor to rescue the nation from diminishing to failed state and civil war. This is also justified by Edward Luttwak in his writing that failure to perform extraordinarily by the civilian government allowed officers to act upon interventionist motives. Also, the arguments by Samuel Huntington in 1968 cited by Kolawole (2008) could best describe the situation that the systemic flaws or structural weakness characterized by the polity could be the justification for a military incursion in politics.

The portend facts are that most of the countries (Mali, Gabon, Guinea, and Burkina Faso) were dissatisfied with the performance of the leadership when in power, yet the enthusiasm with which the military was welcomed went beyond the sense of disappointment with defiance governance under military rule that was experienced by these countries in the 1960s. Although, the coups in these countries followed different patterns the underlined factors that were responsible for the coups were the same. The level of support the coups received questioned the potency of democratic governance in Africa. The fact that coups pointed to the fact that most of these countries including Gabon, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, and Guinea are richer in resources including oil, uranium etc yet the leadership pitched the tent with the former colonizer to exploit the countries and the citizenry through arbitrariness, and enmeshing themselves in corruption which fostered environmental crises, insecurity, rising poverty and unfair laws governing mineral resources exploration and their unholy alliance with France.

These countries have turned to failing states with evidence outlined by Rotberg (2004) especially the rising insurgencies, varieties of civil unrest, different degrees of communal conflicts, and a fair share of dangerous contestable governance. The violence that erupted in these countries is identifiable and attestable to the fact that the regimes are inflammable (Arikana Quao, 2023). The political conflict is somehow exploitation of civilian retribution. The sovereignty of these countries becomes questionable since the exposition of these states to insurgencies, insecurity, and super-power dominance especially France is inseparable. The boundaries and sovereignty are loosely failed and infiltrated into criminal tendencies. These states have been weakened by the criminal violence, so the institutions of the states have been weakened and failed. There was no existence of legislative or judiciary intervention for the interbucution and overbearing nature of the

president who superintended the affairs of the states. These presidents became semi-gods that dictated the pace of development and judiciary ruling. The judiciary was derivative of the executive under the toppled administrations instead of adhering to the separation of power as entrenched in the constitutions of these countries; hence the last hope of the masses becomes a cage and safety net for catching the citizenry. Pictorial shreds of evidence from these states shown in Channel Television in August 27th, 2023 have been glorified ambushed of slums and ghettos with deteriorating infrastructures.

Politically, these states have experienced an unprecedented over-concentration of power and total disregard for the rule of law, human rights violations, and suppression of organised opposition movements. Injustice prevails in the democratic regime even when the military government that was attributed to the injustice is learning from them. Luqman (2013) opined that the states are characterized by inter and intra-group conflicts with billions of dollars spent on elections with self-succession by the sitting president.

The immediate reason for the military coup can be adduced to the economic expediency especially the way and manner by which the economy of these independent French protectorates including Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Niger Republic, and Gabon are being managed. The critics have argued that the undemocratic nature of the states has negatively affected the overall performances of their governments which resulted in a coup. West African states have a fair share in the corruptible tendencies, instabilities, and armed conflict plaguing most of their communities. There is evidence of Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger Republic, and Guinea with the longstanding of corruption, bribery, and underdevelopment. The unstable political climate coupled with corruption tends to give credence to the personalities of the civilian leaders in these countries (). As succinctly put, by Osaë & Odunsi (1973) that the history of these countries favoured political restlessness and instability occasioned by the continual invasion of France. This is because of the principle of French assimilation that projected the French colonies. Obasanjo has bluntly remarked that the civilian government cannot misrule and the military not to interfere in their actions (Obasanjo, 2003). It is expected that the military should not close their eye to what can depreciate the African value system and happenings because they could be enmeshed in it.

Despite the coups, these countries are still enmeshed in insecurity and increasing activities of the armed groups against the governments and the people. Therefore, we cannot but express the position of Olusegun Obasanjo on the involvement of the military in Africa because the military incursion is due to the inability of the democratic leadership to resolve the lingering crisis and violent conflicts that sprout up. The democratic leaders could not canvass that power should be taken from them when their actions provide for the military to interfere in political affairs. Even, the democratic leadership involved the military in the internal settlement of conflicts instead of diplomatically demilitarizing the military from the polity (Obasanjo, 1978). There must be peaceful means of resolving internal conflicts rather than involving the military in the affairs of the state including supervising the election.

France's Domination, Flagrant Internal Misrule, and the Contagious Effects of Coups

Gabon's administration since independence has been notable for family affairs leadership and failed electoral governances; this is not different from what is obtainable in other Francophone countries such as Togo, Mali, Niger Republic, and Burkina Faso. The charade of the administration of Mohamed Bazoum toppled by General Abdourahamane Tchiani in Niger Republic, and Ali Bongo's family affairs in Gabon are conflagration of family succession and failed electoral disturbances. According to Belbo (2023), the misrules by leadership are a testament to dictatorial misgovernance and selfish and greedy rulers. The father, Omar Bongo came to power in 1967 after his demise; his son succeeded him in 2009. Ali Bongo was ill before he was deposed in 2023 and struggled to perform the duty of president. Many observable features prevalent in these countries include a lack of transparency, and an inability to follow the dictate of the constitution because many of these rulers did not

believe in the efficacy of constitutionalism and the rule of law. Many of these rulers circumvent the constitutional provisions, especially on electoral matters to extend their tenure/term when they change to a democratic government. They did this despite the democratic processes that ushered them into government and used it to perpetrate their stay as life-presidents and prolong their reign (Bello, 2023).

The juntas in the five countries also justified crippled economic policy and worsened insecurities in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger Republic and Gabon. For instance, in Burkina Faso, the rebels hosted more than one million citizens in three dozen (36) communities in northern Burkina Faso, especially at Djibo besieged and blocked by the extremists (African Magazine, 2023). This implies that the inhabitants including farmers could not leave the city to work and be involved in trading activities. According to African Magazine (2023), the blockage has reduced the food supplies to the region to 65% and crippled the economic activities, emptying the local economic and health care system. This is not different from what is obtainable in Northern Mali where the Union for Supporting Islam and Muslims (aka JNIM), an Islamic insurgent led by Iyad Ag Ghaly members of the Tuareg community hosted the country to seizure since 2013 (Alexis, 2023). This group was upgraded to IS-Sahel Province in 2022 and is responsible for the major attacks of French, UN, regional, and local facilities and the ambush of U.S. soldiers in 2017, displacing over 400,000 Malians, shattering 1,500 schools, with more than 9 million Malians in need of humanitarian assistance (Alexis, 2023). Also, Mali has one of the highest rates of acute malnutrition with over 30% of children under five years exhibiting stunted growth, gross corruption, low adult literacy (36%), and high unemployment (Alexis, 2023). Considerably, after the coup, Mali's inflation has reduced from 10% to 5% in 2023 but with a failed economy and continuing insurgency.

There are several arguments against non-participation by external bodies in the management of any nation as stated in the UN Charter, African Charter, and ECOWAS Charter, no matter how the state is weak, fragile, or dependent, the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of the sovereign nation still holds (Vogt, 1992). Regrettably, the involvement of foreign nations and bodies in the leadership tussle in Niger Republic, Burkina Faso, Gabon, Mali, and Guinea among blocs calls for interrogation. The striving for economic liberation by the concerned countries and the infiltration of France in the management of these states is unthinkable. The tinkling intervention of France in the management of the state affairs of the former colonies may be interrogated especially Niger Republic, Gabon, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Guinea as they are witnessing constant military coups. African countries have enjoyed cooperation in assisting each other to battle against injustice and militias, like the deployment of soldiers in achieving peace in Angola, Zimbabwe, Mali, Uganda, and Gambia. Also, there was support given by Nigeria against the armed struggle West African states sub-region and the military coup with the justification of benefitting the masses.

However, the internal governments of these states have expatiated that they would transition to civilian power within one or two years for stability and settlement of internal wrangling among the varying factions in the country. The involvement of Nigeria in triggering the armed conflict against the neighboring country could be viewed from different perspectives from that of France, first, the internal marginalization, the contagious effects of the internal wrangling and twisting of the military coup on the neighboring countries especially Nigeria. Although the justification provided by the ECOWAS might be fictitious the internal mingling of the former colonizer (France) that predated the coups in these former French colonies could be adduced to be usurpation of the rights of the African citizens.

However, one of the major problems of ECOWAS in achieving peace in the sub-region is the problem of cohesion among the leaders; this is causing the internal rivalry between leadership in anticipation of policy which is hampering the goal of deployment of armed military men against the coup plotter in the Niger Republic (Adefisoye & Braimah, 2023). For instance, Burkina Faso, Mali, and the Republic of Guinea are part of the ECOWAS but they were against external intervention in the management of coup conflict and leadership tussles in their countries. Another challenge as posited by Konteh (2008) has to do with the capacity of the

organisation to manage the processes of their armed intervention when it becomes a protracted conflict. This is because the scope, institutional structure, and mandates of the organisation will pose a lot of setbacks for their involvement. The commencement of the war might be easy but the challenge of turning to a proxy war between the two blocs; Russia and the United States of America in funding and supplying of armament for their allies is visible. The involvement of France should be guided by the fact that collectivity among states will guarantee the security and safety of individual states while their rigidity to adhere to the principle of balance of power as a means of maintaining peace rather than collective association will cause and prolong global war (Kolawole, 2008). One visibility common cause is the rate of capital flight by the colonizer through Multinational and transnational corporations and this has resulted in a lack of development of the hinterland by the subsisting governments.

Although, France has been subjugating these countries and made them subservient to the metropole-Paris even after their independence. Structurally, these countries are subservient politically, economically, and military-wise by the colonial master. France's influence and its conservation with its former colonies has been through policy of *la politique de cooperation* with la cooperation becoming the instrument of French foreign policy of maintaining peace at the same time, exploiting African countries' economies. The foreign policy allowed the French government to preserve French military superiority in their French colonies despite their independence (Oblade, 2008). The policy retained the exclusiveness that France had enjoyed in Francophone Africa before their independence. The policy provided France the chance not only to remain influential on the African continent but also to ensure the world status of France in the specific context of a permanent confrontation between two forms of imperialists namely the United States and Russia (Oblade, 2008; Cazeneuve, 1998). According to the statistics, France is maintaining more than one thousand five hundred armed (1500) forces in Niger Republic and 2000 troops in Mali (Alexis, 2023).

Proofs were numerous that the independence granted by France to its former colonies like Mali, Congo, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Ivory Coast, and Gabon was merely pauperized sovereignty (Adetiloye & Duruji, 2013). This is because the sovereignty came with a clause and the agreements (pacts) covered defense, supply of weapons, training of armed officers, technical and logistical support, and control over the unit of presidential guards, secret services, military intelligence, and economy (Oblade, 2008). The first pact established by France on December 19, 1947, was a deliberate attempt to under-develop and force France to interfere militarily in the affairs of the former colonies despite the pact acknowledging the sovereignty of its members (Osae & Odunsi, 1973). Part of the treaty also allowed former French colonies to contribute 85 percent (eighty-five percent) of their bank reserve to the France Central Bank under the control of the French Government, the pact allowed the French government to invest the monies in the French market but did not permit member states to access freely to their bank reserve (Quao, 2023).

Although, democracy was introduced by France to its former colonies to abridge themselves with the new tasks of development, , the democratic reforms so much desired in the 1990s by these countries once unburdened themselves from the costly and unruly mistake of the military government. These states were entangled with the progressive elements of transiting from state ownership of the means of production to a market economy controlled by multinational organisations (France). Hence, democracy did not bring necessary prosperity but chaos and rising criminality.

The post-independence is clustered with the unwavering support of the French Government against the democratic governments that took over from them during independence and handling power to the military that hijacked the government through coups and counter-coups. A little discussion on political imbroglio made African citizens demand for coups and counter-coups when the governments were not doing the bidding of the people. Arguably, the AU charter has declared every unconstitutional means of acquiring power in Africa as null and void, despite this, France unapologetically accepted the coups in the Chad Republic in 2012 and in

retrospection, the French President, Emmanuel Macron said that France would be there to keep alive the promise of peaceful Chad and that the transition orchestrated by the military would stabilise the polity as well made it inclusive, dialoguing and handed over power within 18-month to the civilian government (Jawo, 2022). This decision has negatively affected the African States as the African Union could not suspend the Chad Republic concerning the African Charter (January 2007) and the Lome Declaration of July 2000.

However, in hot political issues involving France and another superpower, France played a double game of opposing the coups d'état that occurred in Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Gabon, but failed in the intervention mechanism. According to Pac (2003), the rapid intervention force of the French army in francophone states gave France the capacity to protect its interests in Africa in a political and military acceptability. Meanwhile, the crisis between Russia and Ukraine since 2022 constitutes a clog in the wheel of the superpower nation especially Europe in getting natural resources like natural gas from African countries since Russia has cut off the supply of gas to European nations. The North Stream pipe that was blown up by the Ukraine (this was blowing up by the United States of America) affected the supplies of gas to European countries. Alternatively, the Trans-Sahara pipeline TSGP or better called NIGAL pipeline from Nigeria to Algeria to diversify the European gas supplies was also stopped by the Niger Republic because of the coups. Meanwhile, France has been using different methods to exercise its supremacy over its former colonies like introducing RECAP (Reinforcing African Peacekeeping Capacities) in 22nd May 1997 which sought to legitimize France's continued presence in Africa and meet the demands of its defense accords with friendly states in Africa after the post-cold war which against unilateral interventions and presence in Africa of external actors. France has remained one of the most iconic imperialists with string instruments of hampering the development of African nations.

Despite the military usurpation, France companies still exist in their former colonies with France accounting for more than 200 companies or subsidiaries in Mali, 45 in Burkina Faso, 30 in the Niger Republic, and 10 in the Central African Republic (Marjorie, 2023). For instance, Total Energies has operated in Burkina Faso and Mali through its network of service stations since 1954 and 1976 respectively. CMA-CGM also operates in Niger Republic, Sogea-Satom (Vinci), Veolia, Nutriset, and Orano Nuclear operated in most 14 former French colonies. Also, the Africa Global Logistics acquired by the MSC group has its foothold in the transport sector in the Central African Republic (Marjorie, 2023). Despite the military coups in these countries, Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Niger Republic, and Gabon, these French companies still maintain their presence and continue with the exploitation of the African economies (Marjorie, 2023). Hence, the political instability does not connote that African economies are liberated from the French expropriation issue. There is unsupported that France conscripted its former colonies to sell their resources to them especially Mali, Niger Republic, and Burkina Faso with 58% of the resources deposited to the French economies (Quao, 2023). Yet, the citizens are subjected to human rights abuses, gross violations (Peksen, 2012), and volatility of the polity. This is aside from the arbitrary detentions, arrests, extra-judiciary killings as well as support given to the rebels against the governments in French West Africa. This has affected most of these states to battle with instabilities, frequent military intervention in politics, and domestic commitments to internal political struggles (Jawo, 2022). There is a problem of creating domestic cohesion on matters of political power and economic distribution of wealth.

In another sense, France polarized the military along ethnic lines which has affected the security institutions and led to their professional misconduct, promotion of mediocrity, and ally of the president. This tribal affiliation of the military has further compounded the stratification of the armed conflicts in French West Africa coupled with the inefficiency of the security institutions. Despite the elements of democracy in these countries under discussion, their human rights violations and abuses perpetrated by France and its allied multinational corporations and monopoly of media against opposition with an emasculated judiciary is nothing to write home about (Marjorie, 2023). As expatiated by Marjorie (2023), despite the military coups in these French West African countries, France has continued to usurp its authority through foreign direct investments (FDI), multinational corporations, and economic exploitation while the military announced they have cut ties with

France. It is significant to state that Obasanjo is right when he said that, Africa must cut ties with foreign governments who are trading with them but feeding with their enemies (Kolawole, 2008). Obasanjo opined that Africans should mount surveillance on all those enterprises that depend on the raw materials and markets of the African countries but continue to help their enemies. Such enterprises and foreign contractors who have linked or connected with such acts must be barred from any transactions or construction works (Kolawole, 2008). Obasanjo's speech in 1978 is crucial for African countries especially as it relates to the exploitation of French Multinational Corporations and exploitation in African countries.

Conclusion

The paper centered its discussions on five former French colonies of Gabon, Burkina Faso, Niger Republic, Mali, and Guinea which were ruled based on dictatorial leadership and family affairs. The inhibiting factors of development were present in the five countries as there is a mirror of misrule, maladministration, Islamic insurgencies, and unequal access to natural resources of the countries with the dictatorial mismatch with evidence on father-son succession. France's overbearing meddling in the internal affairs of these countries and the contagious effect of the military takeover were secondary and tertiary contributors respectively to the military upsurge.

For military incursion to cease in the African continent and French West and Central African countries, a practical approach to development must be undertaken with a little signal of incorporating African culture and ethos into governance. This will imbue a developing African system of government (independent of former colonial masters), that will enhance wealth creation and wealth redistribution in Africa. There is also a need for coordinated efforts aimed towards actualizing continental conflict management within the African sub-region. This will cluster in the pan-continental system of government that will deliver development to the grassroots, and maximize potential, and economic resources. Good governance is a must to foster greater development, especially in developing an Africanized system of government that will improve border control, annex insecurities and provide robust continental peace and security within Africa. For democracy to be sustained and consolidated in Africa, the African Union must be able to defend the status quo prescribed by democratic principles and rules of law and also sanction erring members that depict democratic ethos and slip good governance.

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