

BREAKING COLONIAL CHAINS AND THE SAHEL PACT OF BURKINA FASO, MALI, AND NIGER IN BROADER VIEW

Okechukwu R. Oji & Stella Ifeoma Orji

Department of Political Science

Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu

drokeyoji@yahoo.com; stella.orji@esut.edu.ng

Abstract

The Sahel region faces ongoing political instability, terrorist violence, and significant insecurity-related fatalities. In response, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger military governments have formed alliance and established the Sahel Pact in 2023. This initiative seeks to dismantle colonial legacies, foster distinct national identities, and prevent Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) interventions. The pact addresses shared challenges, including terrorism, economic dependency, and social unrest. This study examines the motivations behind the Sahel Pact, assesses strategies to tackle inter-wined security and economic issues, and evaluates the implications of shifting alliances. Utilizing qualitative methodology grounded in Dependency Theory, the findings suggest that, despite significant efforts made by France and other European peace keeping forces towards fighting insecurity in the region, these signatories are distancing themselves from their former colonial power and their regional affiliation, while seeking to align with alternative entities, particularly Russia. They aspire to chat a new course towards economic and political emancipation by establishing a free trade area and a unified currency. This study recommends for transparency in governance in order to build trust among the citizens. In terms of security, care should be taking in shifting alliance so that they will not fall victim to another round of exploitation.

Keywords: *Pact, Sahel Pact, Terrorism, Decolonization, Colonial Chains.*

Introduction

The West Sahel region of Africa once hard powerful empires like Mali and Songhai empires before the advent of colonialism. France acquired them in the 19th Century during the colonial era, and they became popularly known as the French West Africa. Among the countries occupied by France in that space were Mali, Burkina Faso (former Upper Volta) and Niger. The West Sahel region was divided to suit the French administration. At independence, these colonial boundaries remained and have been source of conflicts and crises in the region. Boilley (2019) attributed the numerous insurrections especially that of the Tuareg's to such divisions. He argues that the Tuareg's of the Azawad region was divided between different colonial territories such as Algeria, and Niger. However, he posits that the division was not the only reason for the frequent rebellion. He noted that marginalization of the Tuareg's by the colonial masters and its continuation even

after independence was one of the major reasons for rebellion which later translated into security problem.

Omer (2023) and Ali (2018) posit that at independence, the African leaders in French West Africa were forced to sign humiliating agreement which effectively tied their independence to continued economic and political dependence on France. He reiterated that the agreement reserved strategic resources like uranium, hydrocarbon and other minerals for France.

The region has been riddled with violent activities which translated into security threats especially in the Liptako Gourma. The Liptako Gourma is an area shared commonly between Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. A semi-arid landscape with tri-border, the area has been largely ungoverned due to insecurity. Terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda, ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) have turned the area into a hot spot. This climate of insecurity was further exacerbated in 2012 when Mali faced serious attack from Tuareg led rebellion (ICG, 2021).

France was invited by the government in 2012 to help to stem the tide of violence in the region. By 2013, France in collaboration with their European counterpart formed a peace-keeping contingency known as operation Barkhane. Together with Sahel G5, they were able to control the spread of violence only for a moment. Using the military only, as a strategy to fight the insecurity by France, could not hold the tide of violence for long, as there was 'a rise in communal killings, jihadists' militancy as well as eroding public confidence in the region's government' (ICG, 2021). France and her allies fight against insurgency were further dealt with in the wake of COVID-19 pandemonium and have since continued to fight a losing battle against insecurity in the region. The mission believed that their mandate is just limited to curbing terrorism and refused to tackle internal insecurity that was brewing in the countries. By 2015, the armed rebellion that started in Mali in 2012 had spread to Burkina Faso and Niger. The public became disgruntled over governance and intractable conflict in the region. They started to show resentment against western intervention. This gave rise to several coup d'etats in the region. France and their allies witnessed several coups under their watch.

The public welcomed these military juntas because they were already frustrated with the outcome of the military intervention by external powers and bad governance among the democratically elected government. They saw the democrats as puppets of France. Meanwhile, France refusal to acknowledge the military leadership of Niger which was the most current in the region did not go down well with the military juntas of Burkina Faso and Mali. To crown it, ECOWAS threatened them with their sanctions against Niger. It was this scenario that led Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger to sign a security pact known as 'Alliance of Sahel States' or 'Liptako Gourma Charter' in 2023. France was forced to exit with their other European counterparts that had been part of the countries trying to stem the tide of insecurity in the region.

Literature Review

Colonial legacies in Sahel

During the era of colonialism, France physically entered the western region of Africa and had a tremendous impact on the region. France conquered territories in West Africa that later became known as French West Africa. They include the present-day Mali, Senegal, Benin, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso and Niger. Just like other colonial masters, they managed their administrative, educational, infrastructural, mining, and trading sectors. France subjugated these colonies to a highly centralized system of administration. Ali (2018) posits that French system of administering their colonies were harsh and insensitive. He further argued that it was their means of having a grip of the region to be able to maintain and expand their interest in West Africa. Africa as a continent was important to France as it resonates in President J. Chirac's words that 'without Africa, France would have been among the third world countries' (Ali, 2018). However, it's well-known that the relationship just like all the relationships during the colonial era was lopsided and this continued even after independence. Thus, they were exploited for their natural resources.

At independence, a new form of colonialism emerged known as neocolonialism. Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger were facing significant economic development. These challenges include but not limited to poverty, insecurity, lack of infrastructure and limited economic opportunities. France had structured the economic system of the colony to be wholly dependent on them for its growth. By independence, the colonial economic *crève* was firmly structured and could not be easily changed. France was in control of the monetary system, and the new independent states trade became monopolized by the imperialist powers. Apart from trade monopoly, they positioned leaders in these states that gave them room to control the government policies. Claude (2008) opines that leaders that took over the realms of power in the colonies soon found out that they were only in office and not in power, because they had very little control of the economy. Thus, since independence, the resource base has remained the same in African economies especially in territories colonized by France. Up till now their economies still remained undiversified, usually depending on a few primary export commodities which has been their mainstay since colonial days. In Francophone Africa, the term, 'francafrique' was a derogatory name used to describe the relationship between France and the leaders in the colonies. The Francophone organizations were seen as a front for continued French dominance of the economy and politics.

Even their physical policies were not spared. Their assimilation policy led to the introduction of French currency in the Sahel. Thus, the CFA franc that was introduced during the period had continued to be a symbol of their economic dependency. Many scholars have criticized the role of the currency. Such scholars include, Merrino (2022) who posited that despite Africa's decolonization in the second half of the 20th century, many colonial constructs still existed to this century and one of the most obvious is the CFA franc. This was originally created in 1945, but it still circulates in French colonies in the Sahel and its imperial founding principles had remained. They believe that decolonization is unfinished as long as CFA franc is still in use. Another scholar, Demba (2015), had argued that CFA franc is a relic of French colonialism. He advocates

for monetary independence in Africa especially in the Sahel. He believes that it will enable them fashion out their own monetary policies that will be suitable to them.

It has been adjudged that Sahel regions' political instability, economic independence and weak government are deeply rooted in its colonial legacies. The colonial division of territories, their resource exploitation and how France structured their economy contributed to their underdevelopment problems and also to the instability being witnessed in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.

At the turn of the century, the region became a hot spot for terrorist groups. The Liptako Gourma which was an area shared by the three countries witnessed countless terrorist attacks from such groups as Al-Queda and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS). The security challenges in the region include kidnappings, attacks on both the civilian and military personnel.

Formation of Sahel Pact

A number of regional organizations were founded, following the foot step of the European Union. This led to the formation in 1963 of Organization of African unity (OAU), which later metamorphosed into Africa Union (AU) in July 2002 which was more economic in its objectives. It was an umbrella body of all the other regional subgroups that later came into existence in Africa. Their main objective was to bring together all the states and resolve issues within them by themselves. Their vision was “An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in global arena” (OAU, 1963). With time, sub-regional organizations started springing up to take care of their special needs. One of such organizations is the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), founded in 1975 by fifteen (15) West African countries. With its headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria, it's adjudged to be one of the strong pillars in Africa's regional groupings. They aim to achieve regional self-sufficiency by raising their living standard and promoting economic development. The fundamental principles of ECOWAS include equity, inter-dependence, solidarity, co-operation, nonaggression, regional peace, promotion of human rights and economic and social development (ECOWAS, 1975). This regional grouping demonstrates West African yearnings for economic development. Combating insecurity as well as social interactions is among its numerous objectives. These are necessitated by the challenges facing them which include poverty, underdevelopment, terrorism, and political instability. The countries as part of the regional group participated in their activities. They collaborated in their security initiatives which include joint military operations and intelligence sharing.

The formation of Sahel Pact in 2023 (Alliance of Sahel States – AES) was a direct response to ECOWAS sanctions. They argue that ECOWAS had failed to address the security and developmental problems of its members thereby failing in the ideals of the founding fathers. ECOWAS sanction came at the heels of Niger Republic coup d'etat that removed her

democratically elected government from office. In a bid to safeguard their sovereignty and legitimize their office, the trio decided to form their own regional organization. According to Bhattacharya (2024) after the formation of the pact, they took further step on January, 28, 2024 to withdraw their countries from the ECOWAS. He posits that this move will disrupt the decades of ongoing regional integration work. He reiterated that this can be termed the west 'Africa's Brexit moment'. Be that as it may, the pact also was meant to represent a rejection of the Neo-colonial structures which France laid and had continued to use in Sahel. They intend to support each other in their fight against terrorism, political instability in the region and a move towards economic development for their future growth.

Economic and Political Motivation

Several scholars had tried to explore the economic and political reasons behind the pact, especially as regards their threat to leave ECOWAS and their rejection of the CFA. Okoli (2024), posits that there are two main reasons that gave rise to the formulation of the pact, they include, their collective need to eradicate insecurity due to terrorist and separatist activities in the Sahel and the need for economic development of the region as the region is known for their economic backwardness. According to International Alert (2018), poverty, unemployment and injustice had reached an alarming stage in the region and had led to young people joining various armed groups for protection. This was reiterated by Nsabia (2021), who posits that unemployment, inequality, environmental degradation, weak institutions and bad government has been affecting the regions stability. He further argued that these problems had lent hands to the people being susceptible to joining Jihad groups. The region has been adjudged to be the poorest with an alarming population growth in addition to vulnerable climatic change. The alliance with France and ECOWAS had not had much effect on their development. Thus, the trios sought to create an alliance that will help them to come out of the poverty level the region has descended into. Bassou, (2024), posits that the three countries had an already existing memorandum of understanding on ideas and cooperation since 1970. He reiterated that MOU includes the Liptako Gourma region Integrated Development. Another MOU was signed in 2000 that abrogated the former. A revised treaty on Integrated development Authority of Liptako Gourma States signed on Jan 24, 2017, which completed and amended that of December 2000 MOU. This memorandum of understanding is a clear pointer to their efforts towards economic development in the region.

However, Bassou (2024) posits that it should be noted that the new Alliance did not mention this already existing pact in their agreement, thus giving an impression of a new initiative. Probably, the military junta has taken over the government in the region and decided to start on a clean slate.

The region is endowed with enormous natural resources which includes uranium, gold and oil. France has been exploiting the region over the years with some western nations according to Hassan & Emre (2023). They posit that Mali is Africa's largest gold producer, Niger stands as the world's largest supplier of uranium and Burkina Faso, gold diamond and zinc. Despite all these endowments, they are among the world's poorest countries. They reiterated that the west extracts these resources at a very cheap rate that only benefits them.

Politically, the region has been facing long term instability due to the activities of the jihadist groups terrorizing the region and so many coups. According to Aina (2024), the region has witnessed a number of coups since 2020. He believes that the reason for these coups was because of the inability of the elected government to address the rising insecurity in the region. For most part of the decade, the jihadist has been fighting over the control of the Liptako Gourma territory. He further stated that the insecurity got worse even with the military take over. According to Nsabia (2024), more than 8,000 people have been killed in the violence and about 2.6 million people displaced. This has been attributed to bad leadership and corrupt practices by the elected leaders. These Jihadists took advantage of the popular resentment towards their elected leaders to unleash havoc and recruit youths from the region to join them. Thus they aim to jointly fight the insecurity that has taken over the region. The alignment will give them bigger force to fight the insecurity.

They also intend to assert their sovereignty and independence in the face of pressures from the western world. France had continued to influence what goes on in the region. The pact was meant to remove France domination on them. By expelling France and other European countries from Sahel, is indication of their need to be free from their entanglement and inviting Russia Wagner group is an indication of shifting alliance. They also intend to challenge ECOWAS dominance in the region. The trio sees ECOWAS as ineffective in addressing regional insecurity and underdevelopment.

Theoretical Framework

For proper analysis, this research is anchored on Dependency theory. This is to enable us to explain the unequal relationship between the third world countries and the developed countries and also to understand that the relationship is the major reason why the third world has remained underdeveloped despite their huge mineral deposits. Dependency theory otherwise known as under development theory was a direct response to the European modernization theory. Its proponents are Andre Gunder Frank, Walter Rodney, Franz Fanon, Samir Amin Claude Ake, and so on. These scholars see dependency as an outcome or a manifestation of the existing capitalist world that is driven by quest for profit. They divided the world into two, the core and the periphery. The core is the developed world while the peripheries are the developing nations that

are perpetually bugged down by colonialism and neocolonialism. They posit that the dynamic nature of the relationship between them tends to reinforce and intensify the unequal patterns. They believe that capitalism which led to colonialism and neocolonialism is responsible for underdevelopment and dependency that has plagued the third world countries. Ake (1981) posits that contradictions of capitalism not only transformed it but also transplanted it. Frank (1989) posits that underdevelopment was as a result of stagnation of their development which came about when they came in contact with the western capitalist system and colonialism. This contact introduced the colonies into the capitalist world at a subjugated position and this led to development for the core and underdevelopment for periphery. He believes that the periphery provides cheap labour and cheap primary commodities, while the core exports expensive finished products with unfavourable balance of trade. Thus, the dependency school of thought believe that the only way the developing economies can make a head way is d-linking their economies from their source of exploitation and underdevelopment and chart a new course for themselves. They favoured socialist principles.

The pact can be seen as an effort by the Sahel Pact to break away from economic dependencies on the western world and their institutions especially their erstwhile colonial master, France. These countries see themselves in a subjugated position in their relationship with their erstwhile master. They were introduced into the global economy on an unequal basis. Their economy had remained on export of raw materials and importation of finished goods even after independence. France Assimilation policy has continued to have negative effect on their culture and identity. All these have left them impoverished and wholly dependent on France. Like the dependency theorists advised, they want to chart a new course for themselves in order to develop the region, politically and economically. By looking towards Russia for military aid, they might in the process open an economic relationship with Russia as well.

Methodology

The study looked at Paris historical and current relationship with the region, relying on documentary evidence. This was adopted to achieve our set objective of examining the motive behind the formation of Sahel Pact, the insecurities in the region, political instability, as well as the activities of the intervening mission and what led to shifting alliances between France and their Sahel partners. Data were primarily sourced from secondary materials, which includes reports from United Nations and other notable scholars. Qualitative content analysis method was applied to analyze and discover the motive behind the severance of their relationship with both their colonial master and the regional group. It will also help in analyzing the implications of such actions in the region. Though the methodology provides substantial explanatory power, the study is limited by its reliance on documentary evidence. However, this limitation does not affect the analytical relevance of the findings. The findings are expected to contribute to ongoing

discourse on the implications of the Sahel pact, how the trio will navigate through the problems confronting the region on their own terms and the shifting alliance in the region. The study offers a rigorous conceptual and empirical foundation to enable one understand the situation on ground.

Discussion and Analysis

Motives behind the Pact

The Sahel Pact or Liptako Gourma Pact came at the heels of ECOWAS pronouncement of their intention to intervene in Niger, to return the democratically elected president to power. According to Zovrokino (2023), the alliance was meant to counter any possible threats of armed rebellion or external Aggression most especially from the regional bloc. ECOWAS has just threatened military intervention after the political crises in Niger following a coup in July 2023. Before the Niger coup, Burkina Faso and Mali are already under the leadership of military juntas. Thus, the alliance between the states, state that “any attack against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of one or more contracting parties will be considered an aggression against the other parties”.

The insurgency the region has been facing since 2000 has given rise to so many other conflicts in the region. There are farmer herder conflicts due to climate change; this has given rise to another form of crises not solved. Thus, there exist all over the region wars of some sort. There is the war in Mali, the Burkina Faso insurgency, and the coup in Niger. The member states are being headed by military presidents. This has led to deterioration of their relationship with ECOWAS and the international community who believed that democracy is the best system of government.

The Sahel pact was also driven by the incessant insecurity threat along the Liptako Gourma region which is shared by the three members. This space had remained largely ungoverned by different governments. They lack government presence. There exists some extremist jihadist group who were agitating for a state (ANSWAD) that has been threatening the region. Organized crime and ethnic conflict had also exacerbated the insecurity in the region. Thus, it was as well aimed at strengthening the capacity of the sub regional government to fight terrorism, insurgency and other forms of violence that are threatening the neighbourhood. The year 2020 witnessed the deadliest insecurity since crisis broke out in 2012. Camillo (2021) posits that the attacks were masterminded by the jihad group and indigenous people who were defending themselves. These led to a number of casualties and refugees across the globe. Ornella (2021), reiterated that non state actors have been playing an ever-increasing role in “powering violence and insecurity in West African Sahel region”. He also opined that multiplication of state-owned defense and security forces and even armed non state actors has led to a sort of gridlock in military intervention. This has made the state not to have the monopoly of force and could not save both the citizens and their sovereignty. Mali's main crisis in 2012 by the Tuaregs' led rebellion spread to Burkina Faso and later to Niger, just like the 'Arab Spring'.

Shifting of Alliance

When Mali in 2012 was attacked by the terrorist group that dealt a devastating blow on Mali, France was called to the rescue. France “operation Serval” came in 2013 and halted the Jihadist attack on Mali with the aid of other international community (operation Burkane), France was responsible for influencing the United Nation Security Council into enlisting the aid of Germany and other European countries, as well as United States in its stabilization effort in Mali known as MINUSMA. They were mandated to protect key population centres, forming a buffer against resurgent of the insurgents, putting up a state presence in the Northern region where the insurgents took over and helping in rebuilding Malian security forces (Crisis Group, 2021). This intervention was widely acclaimed by Malians as they were able to save the country from being overrun by these insurgents. By 2015 a peace deal was signed between government, and various armed groups in the North with the exception of the Jihadist group by the Algerian led international effort, the agreement came to be known as the Algiers Accord. Though it secured a road map towards re-establishing governance in the northern region, the peace it secured was an uneasy one. In addition, in 2014 a group of five countries in Sahel known as the G5 Sahel Joint Force was established. It was a joint military alliance between Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mauritania. France had hoped that they will eventually take on the primary responsibility of manning the region.

However, dramatic changes that took place in the region made France and its allies to struggle to keep the insurgents at bay. There was rise in rural insurgency in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. The Islamic extremist groups had taken advantage of rural discontent and recruited the disaffected ethnic group especially the nomads into their enclave. According to Kreigner (2022), the increased tension in the region was mostly due to myopic policies driven by the European community and other intervention donors. He posits that their mandate was solely for counter terrorism and supporting authoritarian leaders. This was muted first by Crisis Group (2021) who claimed that France and its allies could not intervene in rural rebellions because they were not invited and more so it was not part of their mandate. The UN mandate was for operation Barkhane to counter terrorism and not quelling rural rebellions. The increasing insecurity after seven years of France intervention coincided with gradual erosion of indigenous loss of confidence on their government, Lebovich (2021) posits that European Union in an effort to help rebuild state capacities in the region launched three security and defense programme in the region. They include “EUCAP-Sahel Niger in 2012 focused on police and internal security capacity building, the EUT Training mission (EUTM) for Mali military in 2013 and EUCAP-Sahel Mali in 2014. However, Europe increased involvement in the region was without clear strategic vision or effective coordination (Lebovich, 2021). There was slow progress in improving governance and internal security in the region. It was this rising anti-western sentiment that led to a number of coup d'etat attempts and execution in the Sahel region while the missions were still on ground.

The anti-France slogans were being chanted all over Sahel especially in Niger that has just had a coup because France refused to acknowledge the new leadership. They were accused of perpetuating Neo-colonialism pattern of dependency (Benedikt et al 2022, Bensimon et al 2023). A dispute with the mission led Mali to dismiss the France ambassador and severed its bilateral relationship. However, Paris had preempted the expulsion of operation Barkhane and had decided to withdraw by herself. France stopped all counter terrorism effort in the region in the face of hostilities from the populace. The failure of the mission was evidenced in the presence of Russian military mercenary known as the Wagner group in Mali. Mali had invited them to rescue her from the insecurity that had plagued the region. Russia had already started courting their relationship through the Wagner mercenaries.

Findings

France mandate to curb terrorism was too narrow. They were mandated just to combat terrorism. This made them not to be able to deal with the root cause of the problem which is bad governance. Their effort seems also to be ephemeral. The European support was mostly to stem the tide of insurgency as its spread might trigger off an uncontrollable insecurity that might affect them if the spread goes on in the Northern direction. Additionally, France intervention with other international community was successful initially. They were able to stop the external threats for a moment. Their inability to tackle the internal crisis only created room for infiltration of Jihadist who ended up in exacerbating the conflicts in the region.

Among the countries that came to rescue the trio from insurgency, ECOWAS was not included, which was a grave omission on the part of United Nations Security Council (UNSC). ECOWAS had always been part of military intervention as a regional group in Africa and they understand Africans better. Trying to bring in Africa in the face of their inability to stem the tide of insecurity in the region is a sign of failure, on the part of the west. This failure was made more obvious with the gradual withdrawal by France and its allies. ECOWAS on the other hand did not volunteer to come to their aid until a military coup occurred in Niger. If ECOWAS was allowed to intervene in Niger, to uphold democracy, the military leadership in both Mali and Burkina Faso will be threatened and this is not acceptable by any of them. They will do anything to keep their positions.

There was proliferation of arms in the region and this created more insecurity within the region. The incessant conflicts between farmers and herders over lands that were fast turning into deserts and the administration of justice by armed non state actors only helped to distance them from government presence. The governments were not concerned and they could not even do anything to their military and police force who were abusing the masses. These led to erosion of public confidence in the authorities as well as resentment towards western intervention. France

was more focused on military than on governance which is the root cause of the problems. France needed to balance their roles in the region to achieve a sustainable success. The presence of the missions did not deter them from carrying out coups. This only goes on to show how politically unstable the countries had become and their disregard for the presence of France and its allies. France's non recognition of the military junta in Niger is only a sign for the other two. Thus, calling on them to withdraw was only the alternative in the face of Paris rejection of the military junta. The Sahel Pact came at a point, when Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, needed a cover to protect the military juntas. It also came at a point when the people were dissatisfied with France and their allies seeing them as cog in the wheel of their progress. The Sahel Pact with its promises gave the people a hope for a better future, having been struggling with insecurities, poverty and the likes. Thus, they welcomed it with enthusiasm. They hoped that the break will give fulfilment to their dreams of breaking the chains of colonialism to chat a better future for them. The Sahel Pact also might be seen as a means of their trying to legitimize their governments of which ECOWAS, France and the European countries are so much against. The Sahel Pact excluded these groups from their interaction.

The invitation of the Russian Wagner mercenaries only signalled an end to their collaboration with Europe. Russia is using the Wagner group to build relationship with the Sahel and they are succeeding now because of African current anti-western sentiment especial against their colonial masters. They desire to do away with their dependency, hoping to chart a new part for development. However, it is pertinent to note that the CFA Franc has remained the currency in the region.

Conclusion

The Sahel Pact represents a significant step towards integration and cooperation aimed at addressing a common problem facing them. Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger had to sever ties with France and equally do the same to ECOWAS in the face of their sanction that is already affecting the region. The trios were faced with economic hardship, instability that needed to be tackled and most importantly to legitimize their positions as presidents of their countries. Thus, Sahel Pact represents their effort to bring stability in the region, to legitimize their positions as presidents, tackle the rising economic hardship, if possible and also to do away with colonial vestiges that have long plagued them. France withdrawal from Sahel with her allies after a decade of military intervention reflects Paris foreign policy failure in the Sahel. The military presidents took advantage of this short coming to win the people on their side. This paper examined Paris collaborations and their effort to stem the tide of insecurity in the region, the instability in the region with attendant coups, ECOWAS sanctions and the formation of Sahel Pact. Paris was unable to sustain their initial successes due to their inability to balance their mandate with the needs of the region. They soon realized that heavy military presence is not all that is needed. The

region also yearns for good governance, development and security which are embedded in the Pact, giving hope to the masses and this gave acceptance to the military juntas. The invitation of the Wagner group signalled their shifting loyalties and the end of Paris intervention in the region, as Russia will definitely take advantage of the whole situation.

Recommendations

- The success of Sahel pact can only be achieved if, good governance is entrenched in the region. There should be economic development, opportunities and transparency in government. This will reduce the appeal of terrorist organizations to young people in the region.
- Care should be taken to avoid another set of exploitation by the Wagner group and Russia by extension. As Mali is already paying them with access to their natural resources, Sahel should note that Wagner group is only but a mercenary and won't be involved in their development.
- Their exit from ECOWAS should be followed up with outstanding performance to prove that ECOWAS was performing below expectations, especially in the area of coalition among the countries and that their severance was not just to remain presidents of their country.

References

- ACAPS. (2019). *Conflicts and displacements in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso*. <https://acaps.org>
- Aina, F. (2022, February 17). *Sahel security: What a wave of military coups means for the fight against jihad groups in West Africa*. The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/sahel-security>
- Ali, P. A. (2018). French colonialism to neo-colonialism in Mali: An analytical study. *Journal of European Studies*, 34(2), 112–129.
- Aníbal, Q., & Ennis, M. (2000). Coloniality of power, Eurocentrism and Latin America. *Nepantla: Views from South*, 1(3), 533–580. Duke University Press.
- Bassou, A. (2024, April). *From the Alliance of Sahel States to Confederation of Sahel State: The road is clear, but full of traps*. Policy Center for the New South. <https://policycenter.ma/sites/default/files/2024>
- Benedikt, E., & Dennis, M. T. (2022, May 1). *The failure of French Sahel policy: An opportunity for European cooperation*. German Institute for International and Security Affairs.

- Bensimon, C., Phillipe, R., & Elsie, V. (2023). France starts process of withdrawing its forces from Niger. *Le Monde*. <https://www.lemonde.fr/france/africa>
- Béré, M. (2017). Armed rebellion, violent extremism and the challenges of intervention in Mali. *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review*, 7(2), 60–84.
- Bhattacharya, S. (2024). *The Alliance of Sahel States: A regional crisis in troubled West Africa*. Observer Research Foundation (ORF). <https://www.orfonline.org>
- Boiley, P. (2019). Nord-Mali: Les frontières coloniales de l'Azawad. *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 53(2), 461–484.
- Camilo, C. (2021, March). What next for Operation Barkhane in the Sahel? In *Unravelling the Sahel: State politics and armed violence*. Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI).
- Chikendu, P. N. (2004). *Imperialism and nationalism*. Academic Publishing Company.
- Claude, A. (1981). *A political economy of Africa*. Longman Nigeria Plc.
- Demba, M. D. (2014, April 2). 20 years after devaluation: What is the future for CFA franc? *Pambazuka News*. <https://www.pambazuka.org>
- Dieng, A. (2021). The Sahel: Challenges and opportunities. *International Review of the Red Cross*, 103(918), 765–779. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1816383122000339>
- Economic Community of West African States. (n.d.). *ECOWAS*. <http://www.ecowas.int>
- Fanny, P., & Ndongo, S. S. (2021). *Africa's last colonial currency: The CFA franc story*. Pluto Press.
- Faroukou, M. (2024, August). “Alliance of Sahel” and a new era for West Africa. Daily Sabah. <https://www.dailysabah.com>
- Florence, I. (2011). The role of ECOWAS in conflict management. In S. G. Best (Ed.), *Introduction to peace and conflict studies in West Africa* (pp. xx–xx). Spectrum Books Limited.
- Global Data Institute. (n.d.). *Displacement tracking matrix (DTM)*. International Organization for Migration. <https://dtm.iom.int/report-series/liptako-gourma-crisis>
- Ighobor, K. (2014). ECOWAS at 49: Successes in regional integration, despite emerging challenges. *UNAfrica Renewal*.
- International Crisis Group. (2021). *A course correction for the Sahel stabilization strategy*. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel-burkina-faso-mali-niger/course-correction>
- Isilow, H. (2024, July 7). Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali military leaders sign treaty to become confederation. *Anadolu Agency*. <https://www.aa.com.tr>
- Isilow, H., & Basaram, E. (2023, October). Paradox of Africa's Sahel: Rich in minerals but in the

- grip of grinding poverty. *Anadolu Agency*. <https://www.aa.com.tr>
- Kreigner, G. (2022). Challenges in Mali: The importance of legitimate governance in combatting terrorism and violent extremism. *Journal of Strategic Security*, 15(3), 22–38.
- Lebovich, A. (2021, March). The EU in the Sahel: Prospects for a new strategy. In *Unravelling the Sahel: State politics and armed violence*. Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI).
- Lorgerie, P. (2022, February 8). As relations fray, Mali accuses France of spoiling country, spying. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com>
- Merrino, S. (2021). Africa's last colonial currency: The CFA story. *Journal of Development Studies*, 58(4), 867–869. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2021.1994234>
- Micheal, K. (2006). Dim Delobsom: French colonialism and local response in Upper Volta. *African Studies Quarterly*, 8(4).
- Nsaibia, H. (2021, March). The conflict between Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in the Sahel, a year on. In *Unravelling the Sahel: State politics and armed violence*. Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI).
- Okafor, C. (2022). Celebrations as Mali severs ties with France. *Premium Times*.
- Okoli, M. (2024, July 20). *Alliance of Sahel State: Beginners' guide*. B&FT Online. <https://www.thebftonline.com>
- Omer, M. K. (2023, August). Niger: The resource politics of a post-colonial revolt. *African Arguments*. <https://africanarguments.org/2023/08/niger-the-resource-politics-of-a-post-colonial-revolt>
- Ornella, M. (2021, March). Proliferation of armed non-state actors in the Sahel: Evidence of state failures. In *Unravelling the Sahel: State politics and armed violence*. Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI).
- Philip, J., & Randall, L. P. (2008). *World civilizations: Volume II, since 1500*. Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Tony, C., Gordon, D., & Roel, V. U. (2020). France's intervention in Mali and the Sahel: A historical institutional perspective. University of Portsmouth Research Portal. <https://researchportal.port.ac.uk>
- United Nations Development Programme. (n.d.). *UNDP*. <https://www.undp.org>
- USAID. (n.d.). *Regional development cooperation strategy: West Africa (2022–2025)*. <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-25/USAID-West-Africa>
- Walter, R. (1972). *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*. Ikenga Publishers.
- William, A., Baba, D., Lori-Anne, T., & Ibrahim, M. (2019). Violent extremism, organized crime and local conflicts in Liptako-Gourma. *Institute for Security Studies (ISS)*.