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The impact of Western influence on Economic and development in Sahel Region



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OCTOBER 2024



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The impact of Western influence on economy and development in Sahel region Report

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October 2024.

Citation: Ghada Fouad (Editor), the impact of Western influence on economy and development in Sahel region Report, (Cairo: African Centre for Research and Strategic Studies (ACRESS), International Research Institute for Advanced Systems (IRIAS), October 2024).

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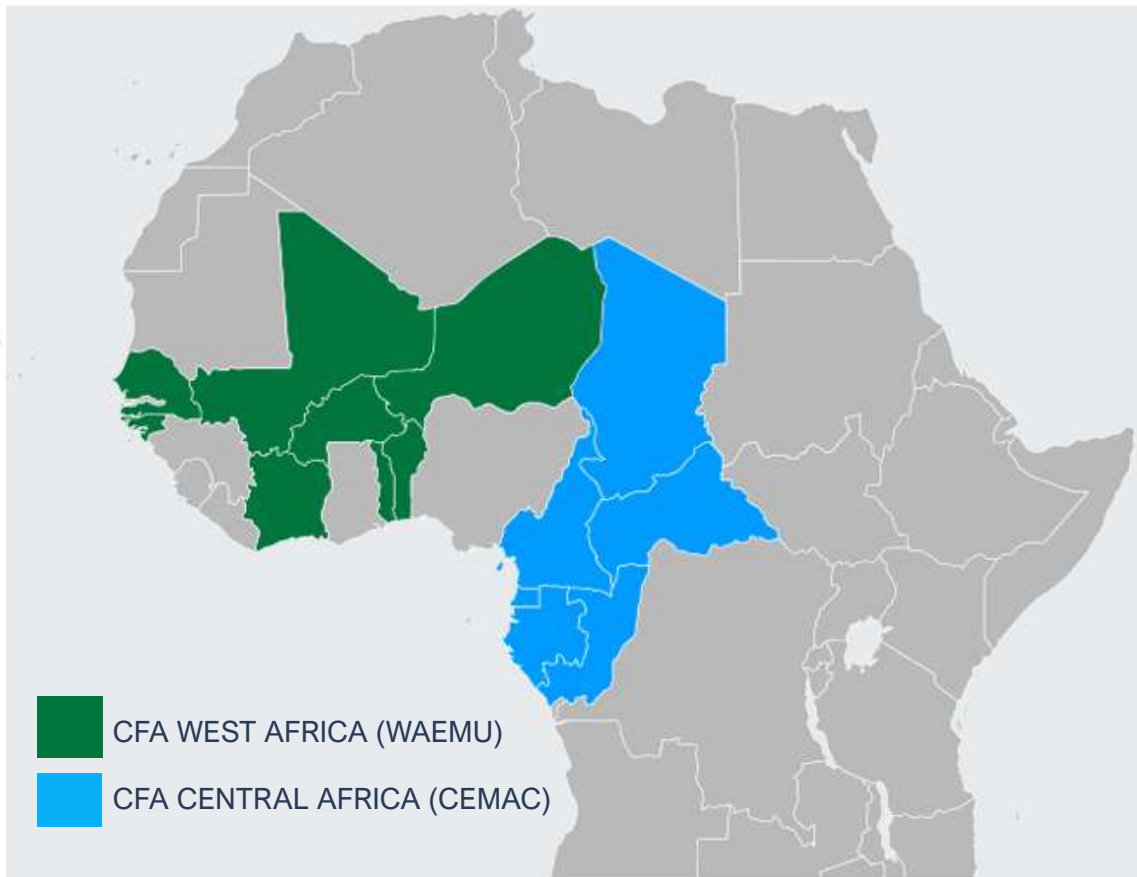
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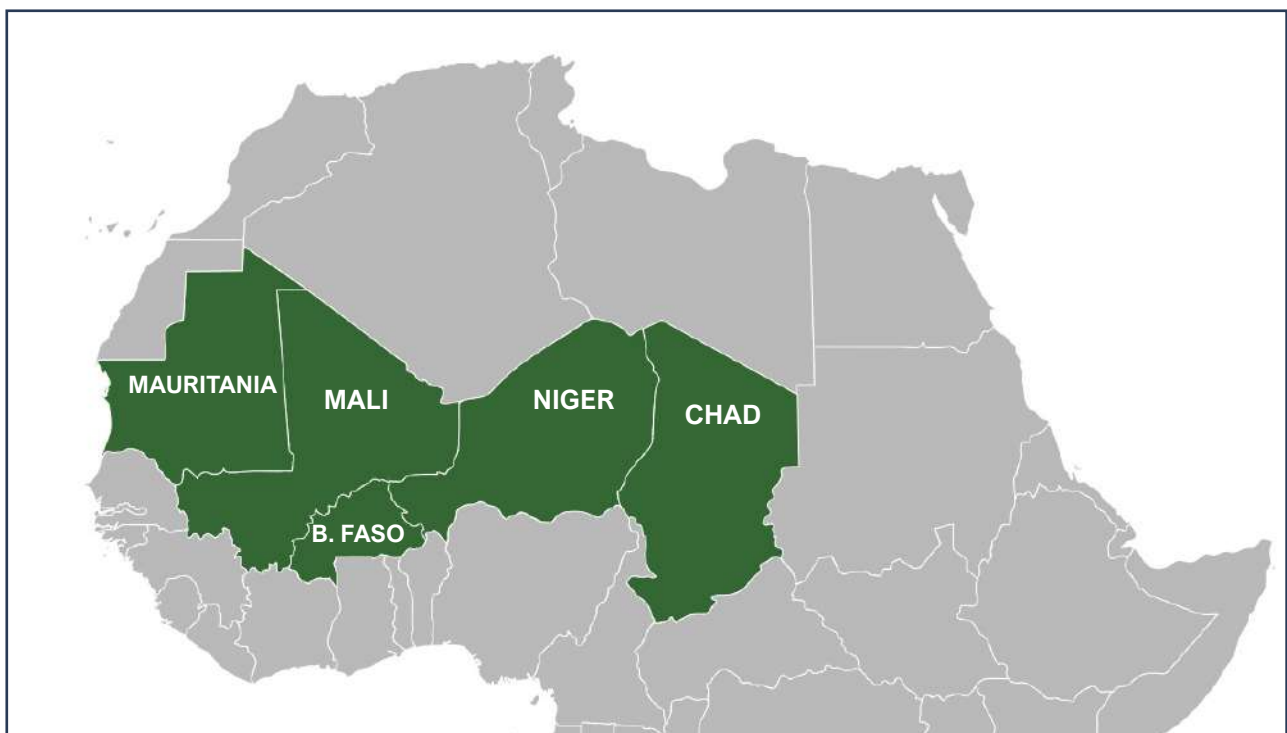
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African Countries using the CFA Franc



Map of Sahel Countries (G5)



SAHEL REGION: FUTURE COOPERATION ASPECTS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND AFRICA



Dr. Ghada Fouad

Director of African Center for Research and Strategic Studies (ACRESS) - Egypt

“the Russian government should prioritize education in its future cooperation with the Sahel countries. The provision of scholarships to the Sahel region should align with the industrial and developmental needs of its nations, as well as their natural resources such as oil, gas, and minerals.”

Introduction:

Western influence and dominance over former colonies, particularly in West Africa, persisted even after these countries gained political independence. This continued through linking their monetary and financial policies with the former colonizer, who transitioned into an economic and trade partner. As a result, this new partner secured exclusive contracts to exploit the wealth of these countries in exchange for promises of economic development for the African communities. Not only that, but this new partner also ensured its supervision and control over the national currency of these countries, both before and after the withdrawal agreements from the former colonies, by linking it to the French currency and naming it the “CFA Franc,” specifically in 1945. The declared aim was to achieve financial stability economic growth and to control inflation rates in CFA countries.

Decades have passed since this influence and control over the monetary and economic assets of West African nations, but has this translated into development and progress for these countries? To answer this question, the African Center for Research and Strategic Studies (ACRESS), in cooperation with the International Research Institute for Advanced Systems (IRIAS) in Moscow, organized a symposium in Cairo on Sunday, August 25, 2024, titled “The Impact of Western Influence on the Economy and Development in the Sahel Region.”

This report stems from that symposium and contains several research papers addressing three main themes:

1. An analysis of the monetary subordination of the CFA Franc and its impact on the financial and monetary policies of the Sahel region.
2. The impact of colonial policies on the current governmental administrative systems in the Sahel region.

3. Finally, the hoped-for Russian role in the development of the Sahel region amid mutual gains.

Regarding the first theme, all international indicators point to low levels of human and economic development in the Sahel region compared to other nations, especially when the potential and natural resources of these countries—such as precious metals like gold in Mali and Burkina Faso or energy sources like oil and uranium in Niger—are compared with their gross domestic product, industrial infrastructure, or technological advancements. As will be apparent to those reading the report, particularly in the research presented by researcher Mohamed El-Tamawy on the analysis of monetary subordination and the impact of the CFA Franc on the financial and monetary policies of African countries, this currency and the system governing it have had many negative impacts that hinder development and growth. They entrenched economic occupation of these countries and became a barrier to investment projects of the Sahel populations, preventing them from competing with foreign commercial and investment companies.

Consequently, this monetary policy has negatively impacted the resources of African countries and the ability of national governments to build human capacities and develop their populations. In the 2024 Human Development Report, three Sahel countries ranked at the bottom of the list among 193 nations. Niger and Chad ranked 189th, Mali ranked 188th, and Burkina Faso was 185th, while Mauritania, ranked 164th, was the only country to occupy a somewhat higher position among the other Sahel countries (1).

The former colonizer hasn't merely controlled and dominated the financial and monetary sectors of the relevant countries



but also prevented developmental or industrial projects that could have transformed the economies of these countries. Dr. Ahmed Yaqoub highlighted examples of how France blocked investment and industrial projects from advanced countries like Japan in Chad, either through intimidation or inducement by offering alternative project promises that were never fulfilled, leaving the Sahel people as the sole losers.

Regarding the second theme, it was evident that the Sahel countries inherited not only monetary subordination from the former colonizer but also an administrative structure for the state's governmental apparatus characterized by extreme centralization and bureaucracy. This facilitated the spread of corruption, which continues to drain the resources of Sahel countries to this day, and entrenched favoritism in holding public offices and government jobs at the expense of merit. Political relationships and tribal ties became the gateway to promotion or appointment to a political position, or the acquisition of influence, and conversely. In other words, political influence and public office became means of accumulating wealth, as detailed in the report regarding the cases of Chad, Niger, and Burkina Faso. In the 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), which measures public sector corruption, Burkina Faso ranked 80th out of 180 countries with a score of 41 out of 100, while Mali ranked 136th with a score of 28, Mauritania ranked 130th with a score of 30, Niger ranked 125th with a score of 32, and Chad ranked 162nd with a score of 20 (2).

As a result, this decline in growth rates and development indicators in Sahel countries, along with rising unemployment, led to the emergence of extremism in their territories. These countries became havens for terrorists, with separatist movements and armed rebel groups particularly active in Mali. This affected the security and stability of the

population, exhausting national armies and forcing Sahel countries to seek external military assistance. However, after more than a decade of the presence of international forces, these groups have not been defeated. On the contrary, they have expanded their influence and the areas they control. This internal discontent has been a driving force behind the military coups that have taken place in the Sahel region since 2020, in countries such as Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, among others in West and Central Africa. These nations are now led by new military leaders who have sought to diversify their international partnerships, particularly in the military domain, to regain control over their countries from extremists. Russia has emerged as the international partner that these new regimes in Sahel countries see as the most suitable choice, leveraging the ongoing international competition for influence and control.

This brings us to the third theme addressed in the symposium, which discusses the hoped-for Russian role in the development of the Sahel region.

There is no doubt that Russia has played a significant role over the past three years in enhancing the military capabilities of the national armies in the three Sahel countries of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, whether in terms of weaponry or military training.

This has doubled their ability to engage in real confrontations to eradicate terrorist strongholds. Indeed, these national armies have managed to reclaim parts of their territories that had long been under the control of terrorist and extremist groups, despite the external support these groups receive in terms of advanced weaponry, funding, and training, and despite the martyrs and victims of innocent civilians and armed forces personnel. However, there remains a price that must be paid for the

liberation of nations.

The African Center for Research and Strategic Studies (ACRESS) believes that the opportunity is now open for both Sahel countries and the Russian Federation to expand their cooperation to include other areas that would be mutually beneficial in a win-win scenario. If the focus in previous periods was solely on military and nuclear cooperation, there are now other opportunities for investment in sectors such as education, healthcare, and more.

The education sector is one of the most crucial areas where cooperation between Russia and the Sahel countries must be fostered. This sector is critical in shaping national identity in each country, in addition to its importance in creating the knowledge environment and human resources needed to leverage the wealth of these nations. Through examining the research papers presented in this report, examining a range of countries, one can observe how the former colonizers deliberately destroyed the educational infrastructure in these countries, creating an education system and curricula that entrenched intellectual, educational, and cultural subordination, even after their formal departure. This system is not aligned with the needs or natural resources of the Sahel countries.

To start with, the issue of educational scholarships is examined. The Russian government annually provides a number of scholarships to international undergraduate and postgraduate students in various fields. As of 2023, international students made up 8.4% of the total number of undergraduate and master's students studying in the Russian Federation. Russia offers up to 30,000 scholarships each year for studies in its universities, covering tuition costs either entirely or partially (3).

However, upon reviewing these scholar-

ships, we find that the majority have gone to non-African countries. According to Russian official statistics, at the start of the 2022/2023 academic year, the number of international students studying in higher education institutions and specialized programs in the Russian Federation amounted to 351.6 thousand, with the vast majority from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Baltic states, and Georgia (4). Asia and Europe ranked second and third, respectively, while African countries had only 34.4 thousand students. Among African nations, Morocco ranked first with 3.4 thousand students, followed by Nigeria with 1.8 thousand students, then Cameroon, Zambia, and finally Kenya. **Despite years of continued closeness over the past four years, the Sahel countries did not rank among the top.**

It is worth mentioning that Russian President Vladimir Putin, during the second Russia-Africa summit, announced that over 35,000 African students are currently studying in Russia, 6,000 of whom receive Kremlin-funded scholarships (5).

Here, it is important to stress that the Russian government should prioritize education in its future cooperation with the Sahel countries. The provision of scholarships to the Sahel region should align with the industrial and developmental needs of its nations, as well as their natural resources such as oil, gas, and minerals. Therefore, the focus should be on offering scholarships in STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). These fields are thriving in Russian universities, both in terms of knowledge and available educational resources. For example, in 2022, the largest number of PhD students in Russia were enrolled in mathematics, physics, chemistry, computer engineering, information technology, economics, and management (6).



Given that the Russian government has agreed to establish nuclear power plants for electricity generation in Sahel countries—most recently with the announcement of the signing of a cooperation agreement in July 2024 between Mali’s military government and the Russian state corporation “Rosatom” to discuss projects for a low-capacity nuclear power plant and solar energy generation projects, as well as Burkina Faso’s announcement of collaboration on nuclear energy to meet electricity shortages (7), it is essential to provide a national workforce capable of operating and maintaining these plants. This must happen concurrently with the establishment of such projects, to avoid creating another form of subordination, replacing French colonial influence.

Some analysts believe that Russia has already begun to utilize the education sector as a tool in its foreign policy toward Africa to strengthen relations with the continent. This has been achieved by offering scholarships that meet the needs of African countries, as was the case with the scholarships awarded to Kenyan students for the 2024/2025 academic year in fields such as computer and information technology, geosciences, electrical power and thermal energy engineering, nuclear energy technology, applied geology, mining, oil and gas engineering, clinical medicine, and other priority fields for Kenya’s economy (8). Additionally, the number of African students receiving scholarships to study in Russian universities has increased by 150% over the past three years (9). There have also been scientific and research partnerships between Russian and African universities in allied countries, such as the recent reinstatement of the name “Patrice Lumumba Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia” in Moscow, replacing the current “Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia “ (RUDN), which had been changed 30 years ago (10). Furthermore, President Vladimir Putin

announced the signing of an agreement to establish the “Russian-African Consortium of Technical Universities” in July 2023, which includes joint training for professionals in the mining sector and the training of teachers, instructors, and technical staff in African schools and colleges. Plans were also revealed for the creation of joint Russian-African schools that will teach national curricula jointly developed by both sides. Some countries have even begun teaching the Russian language, and President Putin also discussed plans to open branches of Russian universities in African nations. According to Russia’s Minister of Science and Higher Education, more than 310,000 specialists from Africa have been trained in Russia over the course of their cooperation (11).

Governments in the Sahel can utilize these Russian initiatives in the education sector, recognizing the need to create new generations of well-educated and qualified Africans who are capable of managing state assets and institutions without being beholden to former colonizers. This could result in the formation of a lobby capable of challenging the dominance of the wealthy, economically influential elite, who maintain close ties to the former colonial powers, over public and political offices on the pretext of better education and qualifications.

However, there are several challenges to achieving this goal. **The first challenge** is that, despite the increase in the number of scholarships and African students studying in Russia, the numbers remain small compared to those who have studied under French curricula and absorbed the culture of the former colonizers, either in the Sahel region or in France. These individuals continue to dominate the political, economic, and investment sectors in their countries. **The second challenge** concerns Russia’s ability, amid the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war and escalating confrontations on Rus-

sian soil, to remain an attractive environment for African students. Will they still feel safe in Russia, or will it become a less desirable destination, particularly if Ukraine intensifies its use of heavy weaponry and increases strikes on Russian territory?

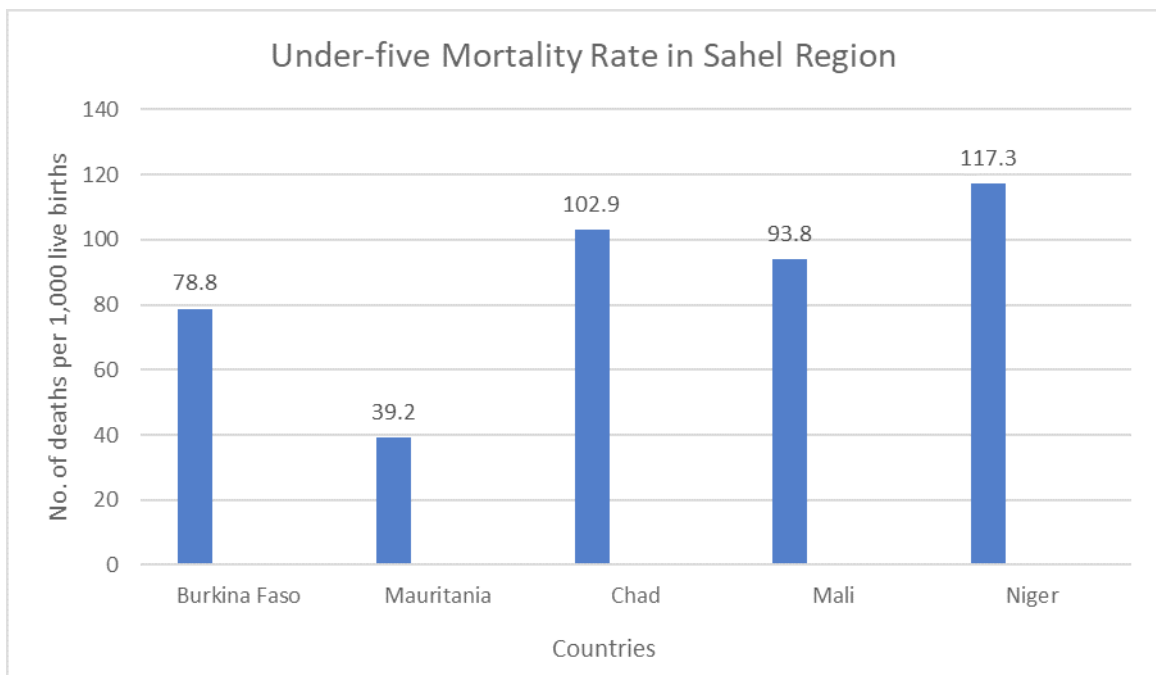
The third challenge is the economic sanctions resulting from the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which continue to escalate, along with deteriorating conditions in the Middle East, particularly Syria, where Russian forces are stationed under an implicit agreement with the Assad regime. These factors add to Russia's financial burdens and may weaken its ability to offer more scholarships or fulfill its commitments regarding announced educational projects with Africa. Despite these challenges, Russia's trade surplus rose to \$11.5 billion in June 2024, compared to \$9 billion in the same month the previous year, according to data from the Russian Central Bank. Exports increased by 2.5% year-on-year to USD 35.3 billion, while imports decreased by 6.2% to

USD 23.8 billion (12).

If we turn to another vital sector in which Russia and Africa can cooperate and mutually benefit—the healthcare sector—we find that it is currently in a dire state, as noted by researcher Omar Bistinji in his paper in this report. Improving healthcare will likely be a top priority for Sahel governments in their future collaboration with Russia, which is a new ally for the Sahel coalition. It is worth noting that Russia excels in this sector.

Focusing on only one aspect of the healthcare sector within the Sahel region, one can find, for example, that the progress in reducing maternal and neonatal mortality has stalled in Niger since 2012 and has even recently begun to deteriorate, particularly among the most deprived groups. A recent study indicated that the shortage of qualified medical personnel and the lack of health infrastructure were among the primary reasons for this decline (13).

Figure 1: under-five mortality rate in Sahel Countries



Prepared by the researcher based on UNICEF database



In Mali, the situation is not much different. A study conducted in the Fana region highlighted the rise in maternal and neonatal mortality rates, with key contributing factors, including a shortage of qualified human resources, the lack of ambulance services, poor road conditions, and the frequent breakdown of ferries (14). Also, As shown in Figure No. (1), The under-five mortality rate in Burkina Faso has reached 78.8 deaths per 1,000 live births, while in Mauritania, the rate stands at 39.2 deaths per 1,000 live births, in Mali at 93.8 deaths per 1,000 live births, and in Chad at 102.9 deaths per 1,000 live births. Niger has the highest child mortality rate among the five Sahel countries, with 117.3 deaths per 1,000 live births, according to the latest UNICEF data (15).

In contrast, the Russian side presents a different picture. In 2022, the number of graduates in the medical field in Russia reached 27,425, of which 1,594 specialized in obstetrics and gynecology, and 935 in radiology—fields that are severely lacking in the Sahel region (16). Regarding scientific research and innovation, Russia ranked ninth globally in 2022 in terms of spending on research and development (in terms of purchasing power parity) (17). In 2022, The number of hospitals in Russia reached 5,200, with 78 hospital beds per 10,000 citizens. In terms of maternal health care during and after pregnancy, the number of hospital beds dedicated to this reached 52.3 thousand beds, equivalent to 15.1 beds per 10,000 women, with 5.5 obstetricians and gynecologists for every 10,000 women. Additionally, there were 49.6 beds per 10,000 children (18).

Given this stark contrast in scientific and research capabilities, as well as the well-developed healthcare infrastructure and qualified workforce in Russia's health sector, the focus should be on investing in healthcare and developing the national

capacities of the health infrastructure and human resources in the Sahel region. This should be a top priority for cooperation between the two parties after the education sector.

In conclusion, while there are promising opportunities for cooperation between Russia and the Sahel region in the coming years that cannot all be covered here, their success will depend on the willingness and desire of both sides to explore and seize these opportunities at the right time and in the right way. Both parties also face a number of challenges that must be addressed wisely.

Conclusion:

After all that has been discussed, we can conclude that the ruling regimes in Africa in general, and the Sahel region in particular, which have successively come to power since independence, bear significant responsibility for the suffering these countries have endured. This is due in part to their silence regarding the unfair treaties signed with former colonizers after the political independence achieved in the 1960s, many of which remain undisclosed and have forced Africa and its people into debt and deprivation of their rights and resources.

Now, despite what Professor Dr. Mohamed Ashour mentioned in his paper and commentary in this report about the «three curses» Africa is experiencing, and that colonial border demarcation was a fundamental reason for many of the obstacles to voluntary national integration, and development in African nations, this does not absolve the successive leaders of the Sahel countries and their people; especially the elites, from responsibility about what happened in the past years.

for the present, the African leaders and

parties have the responsibility for determining their own destiny and the future of the next generations, following the globalization of the world where information is readily accessible, and people are aware of new developments and surrounding scenarios. If political parties in Western and developed countries strive to satisfy their citizens to remain in power or gain access to it, isn't it time for African political parties and leaders, whether in power or opposition, to take responsibility for reclaiming sovereignty over their resources rather than continuing to be subservient to foreign

powers? Shouldn't they diversify their international allies to choose the best options for their people and countries in Africa? Herein lies the role of African youth, both men and women, in keeping pace with science, innovation, and modern developments. If the above is achieved, we can stop the death boats that claim the lives of African youth on illegal migration journeys. How can an African die of hunger or drown, while they possess immense wealth that others, who do not own it, enjoy by controlling it?

We must stop the death boats that claim the lives of African youth on illegal migration journeys. How can an African die of hunger or drown, while they possess immense wealth that others, who do not own it, enjoy by controlling it?



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AFRICA AND THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY-FINANCIAL SYSTEMS



Prof. Alexander I. Ageev

General Director of International Research Institute for Advanced Systems (IRIAS), Moscow – Russia

Professor of Economics and General Director of Institute of Economic Strategies, Moscow – Russia

I'd like to welcome all participants of the conference, and of course, I wish you fruitful and positive work and talk, just let me say a few words about the issue of the conference, and I would like to talk about 3 points. First, what are the key issues in the subject of Western influence and impact and other impacts on African and Sahel region development. Second, what is possible to construct now on the current issues. third, we will address some requirements and necessary steps that should be adopted to improve the current situation.

Actually, there are a lot of opportunities and a lot of technologies to influence any country, especially countries with high technological levels of development. There is information, there are military means, there are economic means, there are diplomatic means, and so on, but a real, more may be deepest force for interest is finance. That's why we have to speak about the world's monetary and financial system, as what we see now is sanctions, trade wars, discrimination, some injustice in trade, economics, investments, and so on. This means that we have a deeper reason for such disorder, such disaster and injustice. That's why the reason to think about this influence is quite simple.



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We need to make the world and regional financial systems more just, flexible, and convenient for all people who are using this system and this not just a scientific approach and opinion. Actually, many leaders of countries including African countries, speak about the necessity to establish a settlement system, not just a new single currency in the world, but a system that can develop financial logistics of new types for the new generations.

Also, **we need some new banks for developments, which will be based on, a somewhat more multi-polar system.** Also, we need to establish some so-called alternative payments system, and so on. And why it's possible? and what the principal solution for this should be? Understanding that the reason for our disappointments is quite simple.

We have a crisis of confidence and because we have domination in currency; one currency or a couple of currencies, in addition to the centrally controlled monetary systems. Now we have politically motivated, primary and secondary sanctions and restrictions. We have abuse of currencies, communications, settlements, payment, infrastructure, and so on. We have some quite not understandable reasons for capital control and protectionist measures and so on. And what do we need?

We need new complimentary solutions to existing financial institutions and regulatory frameworks. We need some technological new solutions, which will allow some technological decentralization to avoid the dominance of any player for example. And also, we need to base it on some quite clear, open, and understandable rules and actions. Such solutions exist and also, we have to base the issue on some scientific approaches because, there are a lot of books, a lot of articles, and approaches,

which analyze different dilemmas that include global demand for international liquidity and some local American requirements to have enough currency to maintain US government debt, but that's an internal issue, not an external one.

We understand that different countries cannot simultaneously fix their exchange rate. They have open capital accounts, independent monetary policy and so on. Also, one of the critical scientific problems is understanding that great money drives good money out of circulation, only when the cost of using good money will be better and significant for all players. Otherwise, we have too much bad money in circulation and the results will be having some poor people, unemployment, and a lot of problems. We'll provide techniques and technologies for countries in Sahel and Africa, because we need some decentralized system, and the system should be for everybody and based on trust.

Such solutions should provide accounting, opportunities, payment opportunities, trade opportunities, and investment opportunities. Actually, understanding that my speech is just a welcoming speech, I focused on maybe some key issues. These issues are on the development of world and regional monetary-financial systems. This provides, I think, critical input into the injustice of the current economic order.

And that's why we should work in this field and also find solutions to ease some problems and restrictions that have been increasing for the last few years. Actually, I wish all participants have a fruitful exchange of opinions, approaches, and what is more important is building more trust and more drive to solve current problems.

THE IMPACT OF COLONIAL POLICIES ON THE CURRENT GOVERNMENTAL ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM IN SAHEL COUNTRIES ... NIGER AS A MODEL



Mr. Aboubakar Elhadji Mahaman
Niger Community President in Egypt

«The impact of the colonial past on the public sector of countries in the Sahel region, particularly in Niger, is significant and manifests itself at several levels, notably through the use of the CFA franc and education system.»

We might ask ourselves, why the Africans suffer from underdevelopment or Why don't African leaders do something for their countries? ... To answer this questions, we have to go back in time to the early 1960s', after independence of many African countries, France signed an agreement with its 14 ex-colonial african countries (Franco-phone countries).

So, the paper will address two main axes. First axe is the agreement which imposed 11 conditions on these countries, and are known as (the Colonial Pacts). Second axe is the impact of these agreement and colonial on Niger.

First: The Colonial Pacts agreement:

It's important to note that finding the original copy of the 11 pacts agreement is too hard, therefore, here are the list of these conditions which I got from only two trusted references ():

1. Colonial Debt for the benefits of France colonization

The new independence 14 francophone countries have to pay to France for every infrastructure built by France during the colonization. but the main problem is that the amount of money they have to pay and the duration of payment is unknown till now for the people of those countries.

2. Automatic confiscation of national reserves

Those 14 countries have to deposit their National monetary reserves into France Central Bank (Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon).

“The monetary policy governing these countries is operated by the French Treasury, without reference to the central fiscal authorities of any of the WAEMU or the CE-

MAC. Under the terms of the agreement the Central Bank of each country is obliged to keep at least 65% of its foreign exchange reserves in an “operations account” held at the French Treasury, as well as another 20% to cover financial liabilities.”

The CFA central banks also impose a cap on credit extended to each member country equivalent to 20% of that country's public revenue in the preceding year. Also, the drawdowns on those overdrafts are subject to the consent of the French Treasury. The final say is that of the French Treasury which has invested the foreign reserves of the African countries in its own name on the Paris Bourse.

The two CFA banks have no monetary policies of their own. The countries themselves do not know, nor are they told, how much of the pool of foreign reserves held by the French Treasury.

“The earnings of the investment of these funds in the French Treasury pool are supposed to be added to the pool but no accounting is given to either the banks or the countries of the details of any such changes. The limited group of high officials in the French Treasury who have knowledge of the amounts in the “operations accounts”, where these funds are invested, are prohibited from disclosing any of this information to the CFA banks or the central banks of the African states.”

It's now estimated that France is holding close to 500 billion African countries money in its treasury. However, France allows these 14 countries to access only 15% of their money in any given year. Not only that, France imposes a cap on the amount of money the countries could borrow from their reserve. The cap is fixed at 20% of their public revenue in the preceding year. If the countries need to borrow more than 20% of their own

money, France has a veto.

“We have to be honest, and acknowledge that a big part of the money in our banks come precisely from the exploitation of the African continent.”, Former French President Jacques Chirac

3- Right of first refusal on any natural resource discovered in African country

France has the exclusive or priority right to buy or exploit any natural resources found in these newly independent countries. the African countries are not allowed to find other partners, only when France does not show its interest in those resources or raw materials.

4- Priority to French interests and companies in public procurement and public bidding

French companies should have priority in winning government tenders and contracts, and then other countries' institutions and companies come later; in case France does not want to obtain this or that contract. Here, the greater financial or technical benefits that the African country might obtain if other foreign companies or institutions obtain these contracts are not taken into account. As a result, France controls the economy in many of its old colonies.

5- Exclusive right to supply military equipment and Train the country military officers

To keep its interest safe, and to make sure that it has a full control of these countries, France used the grants, scholarships and military aids; knows as (the Defense Agreement) published on Journal Officiel de La Republique Francaise, on 16 of June 1961. the agreement says that these 14 countries must send their senior military officers for training in France or French ran training fa-

ilities. France has trained many of military officers in each country. many analytics say that France use them to start coup or to create rebel militia or for any other purpose when the ruled regime threatens the French interests in those 14 African countries.

as a result for this policy, the franco-phone countries have the highest coup d'état, compared to other countries in Africa.

6- Right for France to pre-deploy troops and intervene military in the country to defend its interests

Also, under the “Défense Agreement”, France had the legal right to send troops and intervene militarily in these 14 countries to protect its interests. not only that, but it had the right to station their troops permanently in bases and military facilities in these countries.

7- Obligation to make French the official language of the country and the language for education

France created the Francophone organization (IOF), its mission is to keep the French language and culture in these countries. the organization has several sectors and affiliates organizations supervised by the French Minister of Foreign Affairs. Also, the French language has been enforced to be the formal language of the decolonized countries.

the problem is that it doesn't matter how you are well educated if you don't speak French or got French education.

8- Obligation to use France colonial money FCFA

the most important part of the 11 pacts is the Franc CFA currency which France uses to keep the African countries underdeveloped forever, many European countries and even the European Union opposed this devilish currency, but it seems that France



do not have intention to change that colonial currency or let African countries have their own independent currencies.

9. Obligation to send France annual balance and reserve report.

No annual report, no money!

The African countries have to send annual report in order to get its money for the coming year.

10- Renunciation to enter into military alliance with any other country unless authorized by France

In that case, France forbids its ex-colonies to have other military alliance except the one it offered them or accept it.

11- Obligation to ally with France in situation of war or global crisis

To conclude, these 11 facts, kept African countries so behind and underdeveloped, because the leaders are afraid or have loyal to France to keep them in power. It is also very difficult for any francophone country to emerge, economically, socially or even by education, because they don't have control of their own monetary reserves and even the language, they use is the colonial language. Also, they apply the democratic system which does not serve the needs of our nations.

Second: The impact of the colonial past on the public sector in Niger

The impact of the colonial past on the public sector of countries in the Sahel region, particularly in Niger, is significant and manifests itself at several levels, notably through the use of the CFA franc and education system.

1. Currency and economy

The CFA franc, which is linked to the euro and guaranteed by France, has been widely criticized for its ability to limit the economic sovereignty of franc zone countries. For Niger, this means that monetary decisions are often influenced by external interests, which can hinder self-sustaining economic development. Countries using the CFA franc also face budget constraints that limit their ability to invest in essential infrastructure and public services.

In Niger, the colonial pacts, imposed on our leaders in the 1960s, made Niger a country without any sovereignty. We depend on France to make any major decision concerning the country or the people.

I can say that in all my life, before the coup d'état on July 26, 2023, Niger leaders had to consult the master (France) before taking any important or influential decisions related to our country policies.

2. Education system

The education system in Niger, inherited from the colonial era, presents significant shortcomings. Teaching is often centered on Western models, neglecting local languages and African cultures. This led to a disconnection between formal education and the real needs of the population. Additionally, the lack of investment in basic education impacts the development of skills needed to boost the local economy and improve governance.

3. Impact on the political and administrative structures of the state

At the political level, the colonial past has left administrative structures that are often ineffective and corrupt. Niger's political elites can be seen as disconnected from the reality of the population, creating a lack of trust in state institutions. Persistent corruption and nepotism also hinder the implementation of necessary reforms for de-

velopment, as many politicians in Niger have become involved in public work and politics in order to make money and get rich.

Political connections and influence have become the norm in Niger for appointment to public office, rather than the criteria of competence, experience or national loyalty. Every president who comes to power shares positions with his political elite, and thus ministers are chosen from his inner circle. This, of course, has led the country to lag behind in almost all areas of development.

4. Lack of significant socio-economic progress

Now in the context of the 21st century, Niger is struggling to achieve significant progress in socio-economic development. but Challenges such as insecurity, internal conflicts and negative consequences of climate change exacerbate problems inherited from colonialism.

So, the absence of effective public policies, combined with economic dependence on former colonial power, limit the possibility for sustainable development.

Conclusion

In short, Niger's colonial heritage has lasting repercussions on its public system, economy and governance. Dependence on the CFA franc and disqualified education system, combined with ineffective political structures, all that elements explain why the country has failed to make significant progress in the 21st century.

To overcome these challenges, it is crucial that Niger develops strategies that promote economic autonomy, social inclusion and transparent and accountable governance.

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**SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH PAPER:
AN ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE MONETARY
DEPENDENCE OF THE AFRICAN FRANC IN THE SAHEL
COUNTRIES**



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«More than 60 years after «Africa Day» in the 1960s, many French-speaking African countries, particularly in the Sahel and Sahara regions, such as Chad, Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso, continue to experience what can be described as neo-colonialism. Despite their legal independence, these countries remain economically constrained by externally managed systems, a situation described by the late Ghanaian leader Kwame Nkrumah.»

Executive Summary (1):

More than 60 years after “Africa Day” in the 1960s, many French-speaking African countries, particularly in the Sahel and Sahara regions, such as Chad, Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso, continue to experience what can be described as neo-colonialism. Despite their legal independence, these countries remain economically constrained by externally managed systems, a situation described by the late Ghanaian leader Kwame Nkrumah.

This paper presents a critical analysis of the currency relationships between the European Union and the African Franc Zone, focusing on the mentioned Sahel countries. The paper argues that the monetary system of the African Franc (CFA) was primarily designed to serve the interests of the European Union, particularly France, leaving the Sahel countries in a state of persistent structural deficit due to their reliance on France and the EU for determining interest rates and liquidity levels in their economies.

The paper discusses the history of the African Franc since its inception as a currency for French colonies and the development of its current structure, characterized by opaque financial operations and deals conducted in the shadows. It also examines the arguments for and against this monetary system, noting that the current system poses a barrier to enhancing regional trade and makes the Sahel countries more vulnerable to external economic shocks due to their inability to coordinate independent and effective fiscal and monetary policies.

The paper cautions against a hasty abandonment of the African Franc driven by emotion, which could lead to counterproductive outcomes. It recommends that the countries of the African Franc Zone, particularly the Sahel nations, consider three essential factors before deciding to abandon the currency: First, the importance of maintaining the monetary union to ensure regional economic stability; second, the feasibility of pegging their currencies to an external reference currency; and third, determining whether the euro is the most suitable reference currency to achieve the desired stability in the fiscal and monetary policies of the Sahel countries. The paper also suggests exploring potential alternatives that could contribute to greater financial autonomy and sustainable development for these nations.

Main topics:

- ntroduction

I. Analysis of the Monetary Dependence on the African Franc (FCFA)

II. Economic Challenges Resulting from Monetary Dependence in the Sahel Countries

III. Positions of the Sahel Countries on the African Franc and Potential Reforms

IV. Recommendations

1 The original research in Arabic, containing a detailed study of the African franc, is available in the Arabic report of the symposium “The Impact of Western Influence on the Economy and Development in the Sahel Region”, ACRESS Research Center (www.acress.org).



Introduction

The monetary dependence on the African Franc (FCFA) system represents one of the major structural challenges faced by the Sahel countries since the post-colonial era. This monetary system, historically tied to French dominance, imposes constraints on the economic policies of these countries, hindering their ability to achieve true monetary independence and sustainable economic development. Under this dependence, the Sahel countries suffer from high poverty rates, low economic growth rates, and increasing external debt, weakening their ability to address both global and local economic challenges.

Amid ongoing geopolitical changes and the decline of traditional French influence in Africa, new opportunities are emerging for other countries, such as Russia, which is seeking to expand its economic and geopolitical influence on the African continent. Additionally, some countries are using various strategies to provide financial and monetary support that could help stabilize the economies of the Sahel countries and reduce their dependence on the African Franc system.

This research paper aims to provide an analysis of the monetary dependence on the African Franc system and its impact on the economies of the Sahel countries. It also seeks to explore the economic challenges resulting from financial and monetary dependence in the region, utilizing a descriptive analytical methodology that combines a review of theoretical economic literature with an analysis of economic and geopolitical data. The research paper aims to offer recommendations based on a com-

prehensive understanding of the economic and political dynamics in the African Sahel.

Section I: Analysis of the Monetary Dependence on the African Franc (FCFA)

The African Franc Zone consists of 14 countries in Africa, each of which is associated with one of two monetary unions under France. Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo form the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), which was established in 1994 to build on the West African monetary system established in 1973. The remaining six countries—Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon—are part of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC).

The CFA Franc was created at a time when the current countries of West and Central Africa did not exist as independent states but were French colonies or territories under United Nations trusteeship. These colonies were designed to further France's colonial interests. It is noteworthy that the Berlin Conference (1885-1884) aimed to avoid conflicts between competing European powers by organizing the partition of Africa's resources. The conference formalized the enslavement of African peoples, making the continent akin to common land exploited for the benefit of European countries. To this day, the legacy of this colonial partition significantly influences contemporary African policies, with countries that were once under French control continuing to use the CFA Franc, thereby reinforcing economic dependence on France.

It is surprising that the currencies in the African Franc Zone are not mutually convertible; the West African Franc cannot be exchanged for the Central African Franc,

and vice versa. There is no official explanation for this situation, but it can be assumed that when these currencies were established, the likelihood of convertibility was minimal, as the countries involved were limited to exporting raw materials and lacked substantial foreign reserves. However, it remains unclear why these currencies are still non-convertible after six decades, especially given the significant improvement in the financial situation of the countries involved, which now hold substantial foreign reserves.

The African Franc allowed France to manage these territories more effectively by integrating them into a homogeneous structure with a single unit of account. Consequently, external shocks affected all regions equally. This facilitated France's comparison of the price and value of primary resources shipped from French Equatorial Africa-Central Africa to those shipped from West Africa. Since the French government was the sole administrative, judicial, and political authority in all the territories, it was able to ensure the free flow of natural and human resources within the homogeneous structure, significantly reducing transaction costs and avoiding issues such as the convertibility of the three currencies. Due to

the fixed exchange rate of the French Franc established in December 1945, France also ensured that the exchange rate of the currency used in these colonial territories would not be affected by periodic changes in the prices of its primary exports or by political and social instability.

After the French officially departed, they ensured that the African Franc Zone countries remained as peripheral communities repurposed solely to serve French interests. The core state or major city had all the infrastructure built by France in the peripheral regions designed to facilitate the extraction of resources in these areas by France.

The CFA Franc reinforced economic dependence in favor of benefiting parties such as major French companies and local elites who manage commercial banks, while imposing constraints on exporters and local producers seeking competitiveness in the international market. Consequently, the currency and its associated benefits act as a Trojan Horse gifted by France, supported by a few African elites entrusted with maintaining the system.

1-Table of the Evolution of the Exchange Rate of the African Franc

Event	Date	Exchange Rate
Creation of the FCFA	December 26, 1945	1 FCFA = 1.70 FF
Devaluation of the French Franc (FF)	October 17, 1948	1 FCFA = 2.00 FF
Introduction of the New French Franc	January 1, 1960	1 FCFA = 0.02 FF
Devaluation of the FCFA	January 12, 1994	1 FCFA = 0.01 FF
Pegging of the FCFA to the Euro	January 1, 1999	655.957 FCFA = 1 Euro

Source: History of the CFA Franc <https://www.bceao.int/fr/content/histoire-du-franc-cfa>



The agreements signed in 1972 and 1973 between France and the member states of the African Franc Zone played a pivotal role in establishing a fixed exchange rate with the French Franc. The exchange rate of the African Franc in both zones was tied to the French Franc, providing greater certainty for French exporters and importers and allowing the French government to maintain low inflation and interest rates. This was despite the fact that the Bretton Woods Agreement required independent countries to peg their currencies to the value of the US dollar. This implicitly meant that the countries in the African Franc Zones were not actually part of the monetary system governing cross-border money flows between independent states. Additionally, Article 10 mandated the appointment of two French members to the board of the Central Bank of West African States and the Central Bank of Central African States. According to Article 81 of the Bank's statutes, these two members, among the 16 board members, have veto power over any decision made by the board's management.

Despite the unlimited convertibility of the CFA Franc into the Euro, foreign investors often face difficulties in buying and selling the CFA Franc, as it is not easily traded in foreign exchange markets due to the extremely low demand for the currency. It is traded in such small quantities that the currency is scarcely available in foreign exchange markets outside West and Central Africa. Consequently, it is only converted into other legal tenders in very small amounts.

Another important rule established by the monetary cooperation agreements is the centralization of foreign exchange reserves, which represents the largest concession made by the countries of the African Franc Zone, or rather imposed on them. The rule required each central bank to deposit all net foreign exchange reserves

of all countries in the region into an operational account at the French Treasury. In 1973, the agreements were amended, and central banks were required to deposit 65% of their net foreign exchange reserves. By 2005, this percentage was reduced to 50%. It is uncertain what benefits the countries of the African Franc Zone derive from depositing 50% of their net foreign exchange reserves into the operational account at the French Treasury. Furthermore, they are required to convert their foreign reserves into euros, forcing them to ensure that the euro remains the sole reserve currency in those regions.

Section II: Economic Challenges Resulting from Monetary Dependence in the Sahel Countries

Vulnerability is particularly significant in peripheral and cross-border areas, where governments have less influence and basic social services are either minimal or non-existent. Pressure on natural resources frequently leads to conflicts between farmers and herders. Despite rapid urbanization, 64% of the Sahel's population lives in rural areas and relies primarily on agricultural and livestock income.

The economies of Sahel countries are characterized by a largely informal labor market, narrow tax bases, underdeveloped manufacturing, and a dominant agricultural sector with little focus on industrial activities. The Sahel's GDP quadrupled between 1990 and 2020, and in recent years, the region has experienced some of the highest economic growth rates in Africa, averaging around 4.8% annually since 2010.

Governments in these countries face tighter financial constraints, exacerbated by rising security costs and increasing debt. Security spending has placed an increasing and unavoidable burden on budgets,

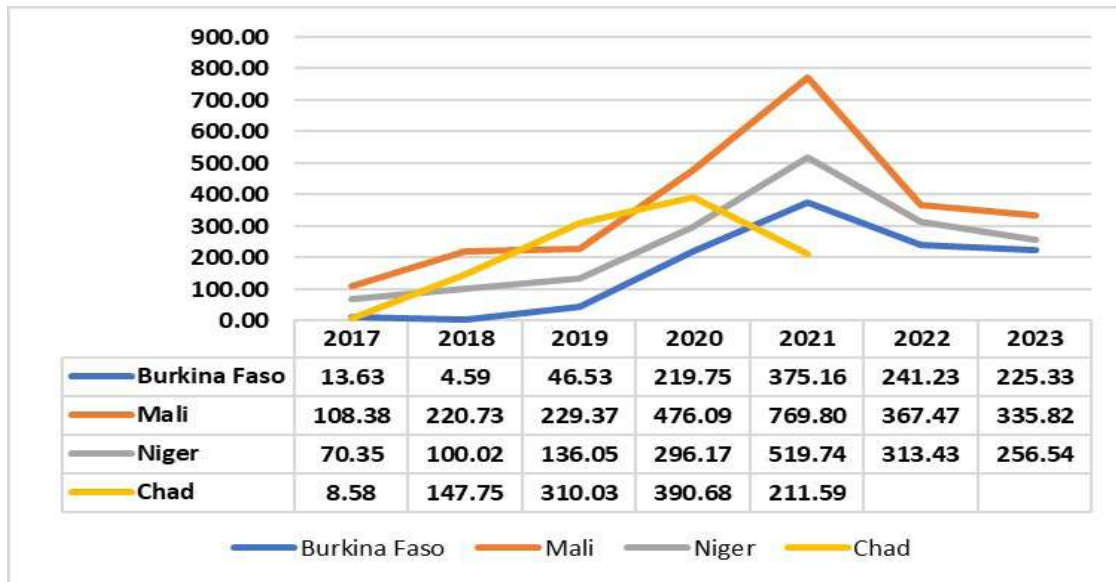
reaching 3.9% of GDP in 2022 and absorbing 25% of financial revenues before grants on average. According to IMF data, while increased security spending is essential for ensuring stability, it crowds out other priority expenditures, including the provision of basic public services.

Public debt as a percentage of GDP has been steadily increasing since 2011 and is expected to average around 51% in 2023. With the likelihood of remaining tight financial conditions in the near term, governments have limited scope for additional borrowing. To address urgent needs, Sahel

countries must focus on grants, highly concessional financing, domestic revenue mobilization, and private sector development efforts.

Foreign reserves reflect the ability of Sahel countries to control their monetary policies. When foreign reserves are low, these countries rely more on external financial support, which increases their monetary dependence on foreign states or institutions. This dependence can limit their ability to make independent economic decisions and make them vulnerable to external pressures.

Figure 1: Foreign Reserves in US Dollars



Prepared by the researcher based on IMF database

The graph illustrates changes in foreign reserves in the Sahel countries: Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Chad between 2017 and 2023. This variation reflects the impact of different economic factors, including the international concessional loans that these countries benefited from during the COVID-19 pandemic in the 2020-2021 period. This is shown in Figure 2, which indicates a decrease in interest rates for international loans within the European Union, falling below 1% during those two years,

which encouraged these countries to expand borrowing.

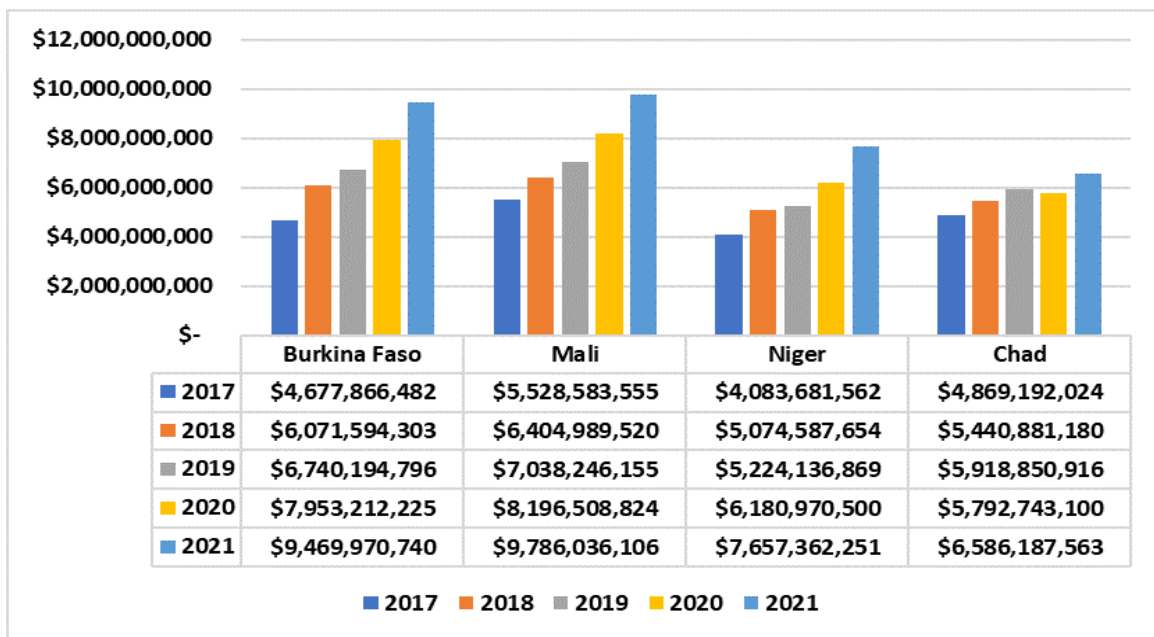
Burkina Faso saw an increase in its reserves from \$46.53 million in 2019 to \$219.75 million in 2020, and then to \$375.16 million in 2021. This significant rise indicates that Burkina Faso greatly benefited from the international concessional loans provided during the pandemic to boost its foreign reserves, which helped enhance short-term financial stability.



The increase in the public debt and its ratio to GDP in Sahel countries has constrained the options available to monetary policymakers, which exacerbates financial dependence and affects economic stability. To ensure sustainable economic growth, these countries need effective public debt

management and the development of monetary policies that balance their financial commitments with their development needs.

Figure 2: Total Public Debt for the Period (2017-2021) in US Dollars



Prepared by the researcher based on IMF database

Burkina Faso experienced a continuous increase in public debt from approximately \$4.67 billion in 2017 to about \$9.47 billion in 2021. This significant rise indicates growing financial and economic pressures on the country. Similarly, Mali's public debt increased from \$5.52 billion in 2017 to \$9.78 billion in 2021, reflecting a similar trend to Burkina Faso. Niger's public debt also rose from \$4.08 billion in 2017 to \$7.65 billion in 2021, showing an increase in reliance on loans. Chad saw the smallest increase in public debt compared to other countries, rising from \$4.87 billion in 2017 to \$6.59 billion in 2021.

Chad has the highest public debt-to-GDP ratio, with the percentage rising from %49 in 2017 to %56 in 2021. This increase reflects weak economic performance and

greater reliance on debt. Niger maintained ratios between %37 and %51, indicating relative stability in the debt level compared to GDP, although there has been a noticeable increase in recent years. Mali saw a slight increase from %36 in 2017 to %49 in 2021, reflecting growth in debt but with relative stability in GDP. Burkina Faso experienced an increase from %42 in 2017 to %48 in 2021, showing a situation similar to the average of the other countries.

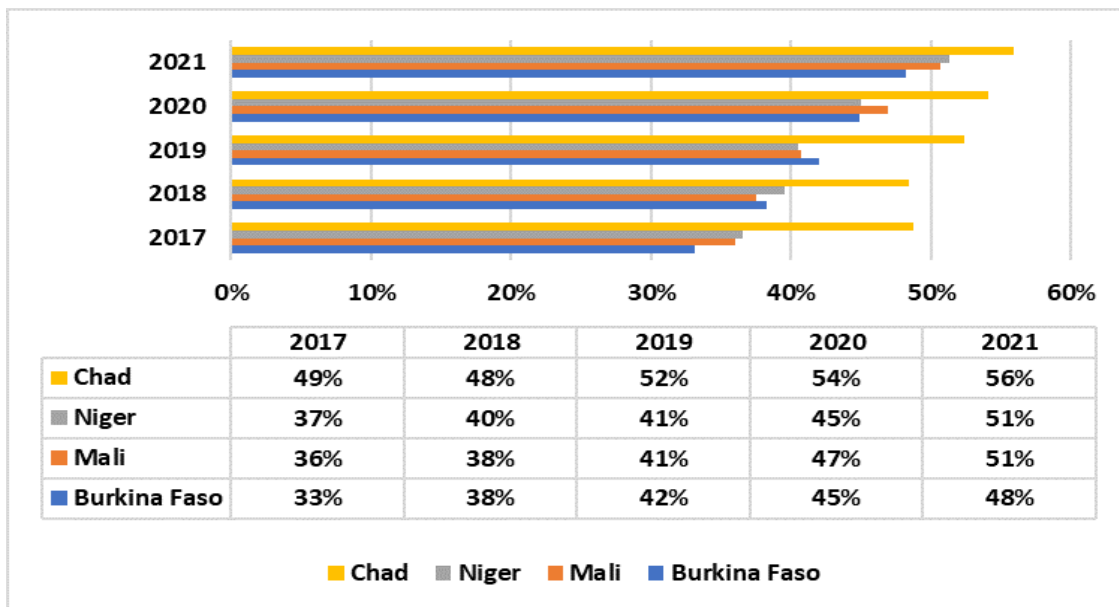
When examining both graphs together, a clear relationship between increasing public debt and the debt-to-GDP ratio can be observed. Countries that experienced significant increases in public debt, such as Mali and Burkina Faso, also saw notable increases in their debt-to-GDP ratios. This indicates that the growth in debt was not

accompanied by sufficient GDP growth to offset the increase in financial obligations.

The monetary dependency has significantly impacted the stability and development of the banking sector. The Sahel countries have faced several challenges in their banking sector, reflecting the broader economic challenges. Among the most notable of these challenges is the

low level of financial coverage among the population, with a large part of the population living in remote areas that are difficult for banks to reach. This lack of financial inclusion limits individuals and businesses' access to essential banking services such as bank accounts, loans, and savings, as illustrated in the Arabic version of the data that highlights the weaknesses in the banking sector.

Figure 3: Public Debt as a Percentage of GDP for the Period (2017-2021) in US Dollars



Prepared by the researcher based on IMF database

Section III: The Positions of Sahel Countries on the CFA Franc and Potential Reforms

The positions of Sahel countries regarding the use of the CFA franc have begun to diverge. While some view the currency as providing necessary monetary stability, others believe that reliance on it limits economic sovereignty and hinders the ability to implement independent monetary policies tailored to their unique economic needs.

On July 6, 2024, in Niamey, the leaders

of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger signed the founding charter of the Sahel Union and simultaneously confirmed their withdrawal from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The newly formed Sahel Union decided to establish an investment bank, a stabilization fund, and adopt a common currency. However, the Sahel countries face significant challenges in their quest to create their own unified currency. They must first exit the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) and forgo the economic advantages they currently enjoy, which may expose their economies to substantial risks. Despite the political symbolism of the CFA franc as a



colonial legacy, the stability of the new currency will require substantial foreign currency reserves, which these countries currently lack, as well as the necessary infrastructure to mint the currency and ensure its stability. Despite these economic and technical challenges, the leaders of the Sahel Union continue to pursue this ambition. However, this ambition raises questions about long-term monetary stability, the attractiveness of the new currency to investors, and the countries' ability to handle the implications of this decision on their populations.

Conclusion

In the context of the ongoing geopolitical shifts, the Sahel countries confront a multifaceted yet imperative trajectory. This trajectory necessitates addressing both internal challenges, including pervasive poverty, widespread illiteracy, and security vulnerabilities, as well as external challenges posed by entrenched French influence. A holistic strategy that integrates monetary reform with the establishment of robust institutional frameworks is essential for guiding the Sahel nations toward achieving sustainable economic development and genuine financial stability.

As these nations navigate towards an uncertain future, their capacity to challenge established powers and attain comprehensive economic sovereignty is contingent upon a resolute political commitment and a preparedness to confront the associated challenges. Transitioning from monetary dependency to autonomy represents a formidable challenge, yet it is the singular pathway to forging resilient and self-sufficient economies capable of withstanding external pressures and securing a more promising future for the Sahel's populace.

Recommendations

1. Review and Reframe All Existing Eco-

nomie Agreements to Align with Achieving True Economic Development in Sahel Countries.

2. Launch a Regional Currency for the Sahel Countries Independent from the CFA Franc, Supported by Local and International Financial Institutions to Ensure Its Stability.

3. Establish Financial Incentives for Local and Foreign Investors, Providing Necessary Security Protection, Including Tax Exemptions and Procedural Facilitation, to Encourage Investment in Infrastructure, Industry, and Services.

4. Reform the Tax System to Effectively Increase Government Revenues, Focusing on Improving Tax Collection and Reducing Tax Evasion, to Support Development Projects and Investment in Key Sectors.

5. Engage Regional Research Centers on Economic and International Affairs to Conduct Further Studies that Identify and Promote Investment Opportunities.

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L'IMPACT DES POLITIQUES COLONIALES FRANCAISES
SUR LE SYSTEME ADMINISTRATIF GOUVERNEMENTAL
ACTUEL DES PAYS DU SAHEL ... BURKINA FASO



M. Siaka Coulibaly

Juriste et Analyste Politique, Burkina Faso

«Les bases militaires et l'assistance des armées africaines permettaient cette politique néocoloniale de la France. Par le mécanisme de la Françafrique, le pouvoir français contrôlait étroitement le système politique, l'administration publique, l'armée et les entreprises des pays africains.»

Depuis 2020, le Mali, le Burkina Faso et le Niger sont dans un processus de recouvrement de leur souveraineté réelle. Ces trois pays sont confrontés à des vagues d'attaques terroristes qui occasionnent d'énormes dégâts physiques et humains. Après plusieurs actions fortes dans l'optique de la souveraineté, des interrogations apparaissent quant à l'héritage de la colonisation française sur les populations et les institutions des pays du Sahel. En vue de plancher sur ces questions fondamentales pour le progrès des pays concernés, le Centre Africain des Recherches et d'Études Stratégiques (ACRESS), en collaboration avec The International Research Institute for Advanced Systems (IRIAS) (Institut International de Recherche sur les Systèmes Avancés) de Moscou, organise un séminaire intitulé "L'impact de l'influence française sur l'économie et le développement dans les pays du Sahel" le dimanche 25 août 2024.

Plusieurs experts provenant de différents pays ont été commis à présenter divers aspects de la problématique lors d'une conférence en ligne. Le présent papier porte la présentation de Siaka Coulibaly, juriste et analyste politique du Burkina Faso qui traite de l'impact des politiques coloniales françaises sur le système administratif et la gouvernance des pays du Sahel. Par un retour sur des généralités autour de la colonisation, l'épisode africain et sahélien de cette colonisation est passé en revue. L'impact de la colonisation sur le fonctionnement actuel des pays du Sahel, y compris le Burkina Faso est le cœur de la réflexion qui débouche sur les perspectives et les conditions de la coopération entre la Rus-

sie et les BRICS et les pays de l'Alliance des Etats du Sahel.

Première section. GENERALITES INTRODUCTIVES SUR LA COLONISATION

La colonisation est l'occupation forcée d'un territoire à des fins stratégiques, économiques ou culturelles. Elle diffère d'autres types de relations internationales qui peuvent être basées sur la diplomatie, le commerce ou la culture. La colonisation procède toujours d'une entreprise impérialiste.

L'impérialisme est l'expansion territoriale d'un royaume ou d'un pays par l'annexion de territoires ou pays qui ne lui appartiennent pas originellement. La version récente de l'impérialisme a vu le jour à partir du 16ème siècle en Europe occidentale, après l'émergence de l'Etat moderne en Prusse et en France. Après les multiples guerres impérialistes sur le territoire européen, à des fins d'hégémonie entre les royaumes, les Etats ont commencé à conquérir d'autres territoires situés en dehors de l'Europe. L'expansionnisme européen a touché tous les autres continents du monde : l'Amérique, l'Asie, l'Afrique et l'Océanie.

L'expansion coloniale européenne a débuté au 16ème siècle par l'Espagne et le Portugal, puis ont suivi la Grande Bretagne et la France, l'Allemagne, les Pays Bas (Hollande).

Deuxième section. LE PHENOMENE COLONIAL EN AFRIQUE ET AU SAHEL

Contrairement à l'Amérique qui a été une colonisation de peuplement (Canada, Etats



Unis) et d'exploitation (Brésil, Argentine, etc.), l'Afrique, comme l'Asie (Inde, Chine) a été le lieu d'une colonisation d'exploitation sauvage. Les quelques colonies de peuplement ont été l'Afrique du Sud, l'Angola et l'Algérie. Les anglais, dans leurs colonies comme le Zimbabwe ou le Kenya ont organisé des présences de populations blanches dans des villages ou des quartiers réservés. A l'inverse, la France n'a pas instauré des occupations par des groupes importants de ses ressortissants, sauf en Algérie.

Les historiens et les commentateurs occidentaux de la colonisation africaine (Charles Larue, 2014) mettent toujours en avant le prétexte religieux de la mission civilisatrice de l'occident vis-à-vis des peuples sauvages comme première justification de cette colonisation. La vraie justification de la colonisation, surtout pour l'Afrique, a été économique : l'exploitation des richesses naturelles du continent africain afin d'alimenter le commerce et l'industrie européenne.

L'appareil de la colonisation française comportait plusieurs entités.

- (1) des comptoirs commerciaux qui collectaient des produits comme l'or, le pétrole, le café, le bois, les épices et les exportaient vers la métropole,
- (2) une administration chargée de découper les territoires (AOF), d'installer des administrateurs secondés par des auxiliaires (agents coloniaux et chefs traditionnels), de collecter des impôts, de rendre la justice, de lever des troupes quand la métropole en avait besoin (seconde guerre mondiale),
- (3) des détachements militaires composés de petits nombres de militaires français et de troupes africaines recrutées sur place.

Ce fut notamment le cas pour la meurtrière Colonne Voulet-Chanoine qui comptait huit (8) militaires français et mille trois cent (1300) troupiers africains, (4) des missions catholiques chargées d'évangéliser les populations africaines et les convertir au christianisme. Ces missions ont joué un rôle de temporisateurs de la tension sociale due à la brutalité de la colonisation.

Ces leviers ont permis à la France d'administrer et d'exploiter les richesses des pays du Sahel tout en empêchant ces pays d'exercer une souveraineté réelle. Toutes ces opérations ont été réalisées sous un régime d'extrême violence envers les populations africaines. Les africains ont été contraints, par des bastonnades sévères, de cultiver des plantations, de construire des infrastructures (routes, chemins de fer), de transporter des fardeaux (marchandises, récoltes), de payer des impôts, etc. D'énormes quantités de matières premières ont été transportées d'Afrique vers la métropole française et en ont fait une puissance économique et géopolitique mondiale. Le Mali, le Burkina Faso et le Niger ont été des colonies de production du coton et de fourniture de la main d'œuvre pour d'autres colonies comme la Côte d'Ivoire ou le Gabon.

Troisième section. LES IMPACTS DE LA COLONISATION

La colonisation française a eu d'énormes impacts globalement négatives sur les systèmes de gouvernance des pays africains et du Sahel, même après leurs indépendances. Pendant environ six cent (600) ans de domination, la domination française a façonné les sociétés africaines et celles du Sahel pour les destiner à une exploitation

infinie. Les mentalités africaines ont été modelées en vue de faire des populations des masses asservies et incapables de s'autonomiser notamment par l'école, la religion chrétienne. La modélisation mentale des populations africaines dans la sphère francophone s'est faite par des techniques psychologiques qui peuvent se comprendre à travers la théorie de l'habitus de Pierre Bourdieu (1972). Les partenaires amis de l'Afrique ne comprennent pas parfois la gouvernance des pays africains qui présentent beaucoup d'incohérences. Cela est une conséquence directe de la modélisation mentale française. Les colons ont savamment étudié les sociétés africaines par des travaux socio-anthropologiques et ont travesti leurs échelles d'organisation sociale ainsi que les systèmes des valeurs. Les médiocres ont été sélectionnés et portés à la tête des chefferies, de l'administration publique et du système politique, pendant plusieurs décennies. Les personnes valeureuses ont été éliminées ou empêchées de participer à la gouvernance des Etats. Même au moment du sursaut souverainiste en cours, il est assez difficile de trouver suffisamment forts pour porter des politiques adaptées et animer l'Etat.

Au moment des indépendances en 1960, la France avec Charles de Gaulle comme Président, installe la Françafrique, système de relations à double fonds, pour continuer la domination et l'exploitation de ses anciennes colonies africaines dont les pays du Sahel. La Françafrique, animée par Jacques Foccart, très proche conseiller du général de Gaulle et la cellule africaine de l'Elysée, entretient des réseaux secrets composés d'hommes d'affaires, de barbouzes, de journalistes, de coopérants et d'universitaires français et des comparses

africains (valets locaux) chargés d'encadrer les pays africains à travers le choix des présidents et gouvernements, l'élimination des opposants, le déclenchement de guerres civiles (Biafra), et les activités de nombreuses entreprises commerciales et industrielles.

Les bases militaires et l'assistance des armées africaines permettaient cette politique néocoloniale de la France. Par le mécanisme de la Françafrique, le pouvoir français contrôlait étroitement le système politique, l'administration publique, l'armée et les entreprises des pays africains. Des « coopérants » français étaient présents à tous les niveaux des armées et des administrations des pays francophones du Sahel et veillaient aux intérêts de la France dans le fonctionnement de ces Etats.

La France, depuis le 16ème siècle jusqu'à 2020 au Sahel, détenait un véritable empire colonial qui a assuré sa place parmi les grandes puissances mondiales. Les pays africains du Sahel francophone étaient tournés vers la France dans leur organisation politique, sociale et économique. L'administration publique est calquée sur le modèle français de la fonction publique bloquée (Napoléon 1804) très lourde et improductive qui reproduit les inégalités, la pauvreté et le chômage des jeunes. La politique coloniale française a doté les pays du Sahel d'économies embryonnaires basées sur une monnaie toujours coloniale (Franc CFA) et l'aide internationale permanente. Les revenus des matières premières sont en francs CFA non convertibles directement et les réserves financières de ces pays sont déposées dans la Banque de France. L'école délivre un enseignement très théorique et très peu adapté aux be-



soins de développement des pays. Les systèmes politiques sont paramétrés pour permettre la domination des pays du Sahel par l'ancienne puissance colonisatrice qui choisit les dirigeants politiques et dicte les décisions aux gouvernements. Les systèmes politiques actuels des pays africains francophones et du Sahel ont été imposés en juin 1990 au Sommet de la Baule (France) par le Président François Mitterrand « **Le multipartisme, la liberté de la presse, l'indépendance de la magistrature, pas de censure, voilà le chemin** » François Mitterrand, 20 juin 1990.

Le multipartisme occidental plaqué sur un socle socio-culturel africain a donné un désordre politique où les populations se défient de la gouvernance politique du pays et cela débouche sur des crises socio-politiques permanentes, comme au Burkina Faso.

Les institutions des pays sahéliens, au commencement du terrorisme en 2012, étaient incapables d'adopter les mesures nécessaires à la lutte contre ce fléau, occasionnant beaucoup de morts militaires et civiles. Cette impuissance des institutions élues a conduit à des coups d'Etats militaires au Mali (2020), au Burkina Faso (2022) et au Niger (2023). Au bilan : la politique coloniale française a fait des pays du Sahel des Etats faillis subissant une pauvreté chronique (49%) et le terrorisme. Cette situation a fait émerger des pouvoirs souverainistes et patriotes dans les pays du Sahel qui ont rompu les accords néocoloniaux qui liaient ces pays à la France, ont expulsé les bases militaires françaises et américaines qui les occupaient et ont engagé une lutte sans merci contre les groupes armés terroristes avec succès.

Quatrième section. LE ROLE DE LA RUSSIE ET DES BRICS DANS LE DEVELOPPEMENT DES PAYS DU SAHEL

Les pouvoirs du Mali, du Burkina Faso et du Niger ont diversifié leurs partenariats en signant des accords stratégiques avec la Russie, la Chine, l'Iran et la Corée du nord. Ces partenariats ont permis d'équiper les forces armées des pays du Sahel et d'inverser le rapport de forces avec les terroristes. Des processus de refondation sont en cours afin d'éliminer les stigmates de la néo colonisation française et d'instaurer des systèmes de gouvernance basés sur les valeurs propres des pays du Sahel et servant les intérêts des populations de ces pays. Actuellement, la Russie apporte un soutien très appréciable aux pays de l'AES à travers des équipements et des formations militaires. Il semble qu'une assistance tactique et opérationnelle est nécessaire pour un certain temps. Les groupes terroristes reçoivent des encadrements directs de la part de certaines puissances adversaires de la Russie dans leurs attaques contre les pays de l'AES. Leurs armées pourraient bénéficier de plus de services militaires de la part de la Russie.

En plus de l'assistance militaire contre l'insécurité, la Russie et les BRICS peuvent aider les pays du Sahel à construire des Etats robustes assurant la protection multiforme aux populations de l'espace AES. La croissance et la justice économique et sociale sont la solution finale à tous les maux des pays du Sahel. La Russie et les BRICS devraient prévoir une assistance en matière de financement des économies doublée d'une assistance en gouvernance économique efficace. Cette assistance devrait être différente de celle des institutions in-

ternationales et des pays occidentaux.

De leur côté, la Russie et les BRICS devraient rapidement combler leur retard de connaissance des réalités socio-anthropologiques des pays du Sahel afin d'entretenir des relations fructueuses avec ces pays sahéniens. Même le succès de la Russie dans le soutien des pays du Sahel dans la lutte contre l'insécurité dépend d'une bonne connaissance des pays du Sahel.

CONCLUSION

Le Burkina Faso et les deux autres pays de l'AES ont franchi les toutes premières étapes de leur indépendance réelle, et de la correction des immenses impacts négatifs de la colonisation et de la néo colonisation française. La Russie et les BRICS sont assurément des partenaires idéaux pour accompagner les pays de l'AES, à condition de mieux affiner leurs interventions.



L'IMPACT DES POLITIQUES COLONIALES FRANÇAISES SUR LE SYSTÈME ADMINISTRATIF DANS LES PAYS DU SAHEL: LE CAS DU LAC TCHAD



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«Dans le cas spécifique du Lac Tchad, l'absence d'institutions administratives et éducatives solides et adaptées aux réalités locales a pu contribuer à la vulnérabilité de la région aux influences extérieures et aux troubles internes.»

Je tiens tout d'abord à exprimer ma gratitude et mes félicitations au Centre Africain des Recherches et Études Stratégiques (ACRESS) et à l'Institut International de Recherche sur les Systèmes Avancés (IRIAS) de Moscou qui ont organisé ce séminaire sur un thème d'une importance capitale à savoir « l'impact de l'influence occidentale sur l'économie et le développement dans les pays du Sahel ». Un remerciement mérite d'être fait à l'endroit des participants à ce séminaire et exceptionnellement des chercheurs qui ne lésinent pas sur les moyens pour effectuer des études et des analyses pertinentes.

Il convient de rappeler que ce séminaire intervient à un moment où l'Afrique se bat encore pour se soigner des effets de la colonisation, cette maladie cancéreuse qui a affecté tous les systèmes nerveux du corps africain.

Évoquer ce sujet de manière exhaustive en quelques heures ou en quelques jours est sans doute difficile. En général, la colonisation, quelle qu'elle soit, ne peut être bénéfique pour le peuple colonisé. Même si certaines colonisations ont apporté d'impacts significatifs sur l'éducation dans certains pays de l'Afrique anglophones contrairement à la colonisation française dont le rôle n'a pas eu d'effet positif que d'imposer et de soutenir des régimes à sa solde. « La France peut encore, avec cinq cents hommes, changer le cours de l'histoire en Afrique », selon la déclaration de Louis de Guiringaud, ministre des Affaires étrangères Français (1).

L'Occident propage des informations selon lesquelles grâce à l'assistance technique et financière fournie par les pays occidentaux,

des programmes de développement ont permis d'améliorer les infrastructures et d'investir dans des secteurs clés tels que l'agriculture, l'éducation et la santé. Cela a contribué selon l'Occident à stimuler la croissance économique, à créer des emplois et à réduire la pauvreté dans certains cas. Or, le sentiment anti-occidental qui se développe en Afrique francophone et plus précisément dans l'espace sahélien reflète sans doute l'impact négatif d'une coopération sans résultat fructueux, à en croire la jeunesse. Le sentiment anti occidental qui se développe dans l'espace de l'ancien G5 Sahel accuse l'Occident d'exploiter les ressources naturelles des pays du Sahel, et de les mettre sous dépendance économique à travers des dons et des prêts. Les jeunes estiment que les programmes de développement ne tiennent pas toujours compte des réalités locales.

Ce sentiment anti occidental s'est beaucoup développée après l'échec de l'intervention militaire de l'occident contre le terrorisme dans l'espace du G5 Sahel. L'erreur de l'Occident est de minimiser ce sentiment anti-occidental de la base intellectuelle et populaire, qu'il qualifie d'une minorité négligeable, refusant ainsi de lui offrir d'espaces de réflexion et de créer une sorte des canaux de communications sur des sujets brûlants. Le 4 décembre 2019, lors du sommet de l'OTAN à Londres, le chef de l'État français Emmanuel Macron a dénoncé « l'ambiguïté (qui) persiste à l'égard de mouvement anti-français, parfois portés par des responsables politiques », remettant en cause l'intervention militaire au Sahel. Or, c'est bien la France soutenue par l'Occident qui a déstabilisé la Libye et permis au terrorisme de s'emparer de l'espace du G5 Sahel.



« La France n'est pas là avec des visées néocoloniales impérialistes ou des finalités économiques. On est là pour la sécurité collective de la région et la nôtre. Il faut que ce cadre soit clair et assumé par tout le monde. Pour le moment, ça n'est pas suffisamment le cas », a indiqué Emmanuel Macron.

Il convient de rappeler que face à la recherche d'un espace riche et sous le double effet de la grande dépression au XIX^{ème} siècle qui a cruellement frappé tous les pays d'économie fragile, les puissances occidentales se sont intéressées à l'Afrique subsaharienne. Pour élargir les ressources de leurs économies et transformer leurs sociétés, elles ont été poussées à chercher des nouveaux espaces pour l'exploitation des ressources naturelles. Ainsi, la colonisation devient une des formes de cette expansion, mais elle apparaît comme la plus sûre dans le processus d'accaparement de territoires. Après la colonisation, intervient la décolonisation ⁽²⁾, vers les années soixante, où des Etats, autrefois dominés, sont appelés à coopérer avec le dominant pour faire face aux exigences qu'impose le nouvel ordre mondial.

La France a-t-elle exercé une politique protectionniste pour entraver le développement économique au Sahel ? le cas du Tchad.

a. Peu après l'indépendance, Le Tchad a tenté de signer de contrats de développement économique, non sans difficultés, avec de sociétés étrangères. En effet, la politique tchadienne de développement économique a été, d'une manière ou d'une autre, entravée par la France. Selon l'approche géoéconomique ⁽³⁾, les relations entre Etats, ne sont plus uniquement la dé-

fense d'intérêts politiques mais d'intérêts économiques qui sous-tendent les nouvelles logiques d'affrontement. Cette thèse défendue par Edward Luttwak, privilégie l'arme économique comme instrument de puissance et d'affirmation sur la scène internationale ⁽⁴⁾.

Les exemples suivants montrent bien le bras de fer qui a opposé les deux pays dans le cadre du développement du Tchad. Dès 1964, Tombalbaye a cherché à introduire au Tchad une société japonaise dans le but d'implanter une usine de textile. Dès que le ministre tchadien Selingar informe Antoine, directeur de la banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas que son gouvernement signe un accord avec un groupe japonais pour la création d'une usine textile d'une capacité de production de 16 millions de mètres [carés], soit deux fois et demi le projet franco-allemand, le ministre de la coopération français a demandé à l'ambassadeur de France au Tchad d'informer le président Tombalbaye de l'aboutissement définitif du projet de chemin de fer camerounais et lui indiquer que dans ces conditions tout préalable est levé à la conclusion de l'accord avec le Tchad. Il ne reste plus aux yeux de la France qu'à conclure avec les industriels franco-allemands et toute négociation avec un groupe japonais serait hors de question. Il faut dire que Tombalbaye était très attaché au projet de chemin de fer Cameroun/Tchad destiné à désenclaver son pays. Conformément aux orientations du Ministère français de la Coopération, l'ambassadeur français à Fort-Lamy s'est employé à exercer des pressions sur le président Tombalbaye qui l'a reçu le 30 septembre 1964. L'ambassadeur l'informe de l'aboutissement définitif du projet camerounais. Vantant le succès de sa mission auprès de Tombalbaye, l'ambassadeur ⁽⁵⁾ écrit dans

son rapport destiné au Ministère français des affaires étrangères : « Je lui ai fait savoir qu'il convenait donc que le Tchad signe à son tour avec le groupe franco-allemand. Toute négociation avec les japonais étant hors de propos ». Dans sa capitulation devant l'ambassadeur français, le Président Tombalbaye dit : « J'aurai pu signer — l'an dernier — mais je suis plus seul, il y a le bureau politique national, le comité de l'emprunt ». A Paris, le département de la coopération française a attiré l'attention du ministre conseiller de l'ambassade du Japon sur la situation créée par l'offre du groupe japonais. Il lui a été indiqué que cette initiative paraissait pour la France d'autant plus inopportune qu'elle avait été prise au moment même où les pourparlers entre le gouvernement tchadien et le groupe franco-allemand étaient sur le point d'aboutir. « nous espérons, en conséquence, que le gouvernement de Tokyo s'efforcera de décourager le groupe d'industriel japonais » a indiqué le département de la Coopération.

Pour sa part, M. Kitahara a indiqué qu'il n'était pas au courant de cette affaire, mais qu'il allait aussitôt informer son gouvernement de la position française ⁽⁶⁾.

Finalement, la France a réussi à saboter le projet de textile tchado-japonais et ironie de l'histoire le projet du chemin de fer n'a jamais eu lieu. Ce qui est sûr, le gouvernement tchadien ignorait le contact franco-japonais et comment les industriels japonais ont été dissuadés.

En exerçant de telles pressions, sur le Tchad et sur le Japon, le marché revient finalement aux industriels choisis par la France et la signature du protocole d'accord sur la création de l'industrie textile au

Tchad a eu lieu à Paris, le 6 janvier 1965.

La politique protectionniste de la France ne date pas d'aujourd'hui, elle a été exprimée par Jules Ferry lors de la conquête du Tonkin : « la politique coloniale est fille de la politique industrielle [...] l'Europe eut pu ne pas chercher en dehors de ses propres limites des débouchés de sa production. Mais tout le monde veut filer, forger, distiller, fabriquer du sucre et l'exporter ». Avec l'avènement de nouvelles puissances industrielles - les Etats-Unis, la Russie, l'Allemagne - la nécessité commande ainsi cette expansion outre-mer.

• Un autre exemple peut être cité, cette fois-ci avec **une firme soudanaise**, « The Textile Manufactory Company », dont le siège est à Khartoum. Elle s'est intéressée au marché du coton tchadien, sachant que le Tchad a produit en deux ans (1964 et 1965) un total de 206.000 tonnes de coton. La Firme a proposé aux autorités tchadiennes, la création d'une usine de fabrication textile à Fort-Lamy représentant un investissement de l'ordre de 100 millions CFA. **Le Soudan est un pays arabo-musulman et pour la France, l'introduction au Tchad des sociétés soudanaises constitue à long terme une menace pour la présence et la culture françaises.** Ainsi, « The Textile Manufactory Company » a aussi été empêchée par la France, bien que la gamme de production envisagée par la société, à partir du coton local, porte sur : le coton hydrophile, les pagnes de 5 à 10 yards et les pagnes T.O.B., les tricots de corps et les serviettes de toilette.

a. La concurrence franco-européenne au Tchad

La politique de protection de la France s'exerce même contre quelques pays d'Eu-



rope. Quand Le 14 Mai 1966, Tombalbaye a fait savoir à la firme DINKERMANN ERA-TEC, à la suite de ses propositions du 14 mars 1966 pour l'installation d'une chaîne d'hôtels, que ses « projets ont retenu toute son attention » et qu'il propose de les étudier conjointement à Fort-Lamy avec les représentants de la firme attendus pour la fin de mai 1966 ⁽⁷⁾, la France n'a pas tardé à exprimer son désaccord. Ainsi, lors de son entretien avec Tombalbaye, le 30 mars 1966, à l'occasion de son séjour à Fort-Lamy, M. Jacques Foccart Secrétaire général pour la Communauté et les affaires africaines et malgaches, a rappelé les inconvénients qu'il y aurait pour eux à conclure, en vue de la construction d'un **réseau hôtelier**, un contrat qui se traduirait par une charge nouvelle trop lourde pour le budget de l'Etat. Tombalbaye penchait en faveur du projet. Foccart a rappelé que l'UDETA avait entrepris des études dont les résultats pourraient être intéressants pour le Tchad et bien adaptés aux nécessités réelles du pays. **De même l'ambassadeur français a rappelé au cours de l'entretien que même hors de Fort-Lamy, certaines implantations d'hôtels qui figuraient dans le projet ERATEC paraissaient ne répondre qu'à des considérations de prestiges et que leur gestion se traduirait par un inévitable déficit.** A la suite de ces pressions françaises, Tombalbaye a renoncé à la construction d'un nouvel hôtel à Fort-Lamy et a compris, que l'ouverture prochaine de l'hôtel « La Tchadienne » suffisait largement à satisfaire les besoins nouveaux de la capitale, disait l'ambassadeur dans son rapport ⁽⁸⁾.

Pour la construction des logements préfabriqués, la construction d'un nouveau palais, la reprise de l'opération routière Fort-Archambault-Guilendeng, l'ambas-

sadeur français ⁽⁹⁾ — sur instruction de son gouvernement — a rappelé à Tombalbaye le 4 mars 1967 les préoccupations que ne manquerait pas de causer à la France, dans la conjoncture actuelle, toute initiative tchadienne qui pourrait aggraver l'endettement de l'Etat et qui pouvait provoquer à Paris certaines craintes comme le **contrat avec la firme italienne Ircom**. Au cours d'un entretien le 26 mai 1967, avec l'ambassadeur Français de Commines, Tombalbaye a désavoué le projet d'Accord avec la société allemande Ferrostaal, allant jusqu'à accuser son ministre Diguimbaye de les avoir signés derrière son dos ⁽¹⁰⁾

Lors de son entretien avec Tombalbaye le 8 juillet 1967, l'ambassadeur de France M. de Commines a fait part à Tombalbaye de la décision du gouvernement français de surseoir provisoirement au remboursement par le trésor tchadien de l'avance de 500 millions de Fcfa consentie le 10 mars 1967 et il a profité pour exprimer à Tombalbaye quelques inquiétudes sur le récent séjour à Fort-Lamy de représentants de KRUPP dont on disait qu'ils étaient venus négocier la vente au Tchad pour plusieurs centaines de millions, de camions et de barges frigorifiques. Tombalbaye lui a répondu qu'il avait en effet reçu ces envoyés, mais qu'il avait invoqué la situation financière pour repousser à plus tard leur proposition ⁽¹¹⁾.

Ces exemples montrent que les pays décolonisés sont victimes de la politique protectionniste de la France qui a empêché tout développement. Et cela justifie la montée de l'extrémisme facilitée par l'absence des structures administratives et éducatives. Les terroristes ont trouvé un terrain propice pour s'y installer.

Prenant le cas de l'espace du bassin du Lac Tchad où deux des quatre pays appartiennent à l'espace du G5 Sahel, en l'occurrence le Niger et le Tchad. Dans ces deux pays, il convient de constater que la politique coloniale française a profondément influencé le système administratif et éducatif. La structuration administrative imposée par les colonisateurs a souvent été conçue pour servir les intérêts de la puissance coloniale, sans tenir compte des structures préexistantes ou des besoins des populations locales.

Dans de nombreux cas, les Français ont instauré un système administratif centralisé et autoritaire, favorisant la marginalisation de certaines communautés et régions au profit d'autres. Cette approche a pu engendrer des tensions et des frustrations parmi les groupes défavorisés, créant un terreau propice au renforcement des groupes terroristes tel que celui de Boko Haram.

En ce qui concerne le système éducatif, les politiques coloniales ont souvent promu une éducation qui servait les intérêts de la métropole, négligeant les langues et cultures locales. Cela a conduit à un décalage entre le curriculum enseigné et les besoins réels des communautés locales, ainsi qu'à un manque d'inclusivité et d'accès à l'éducation pour de nombreuses populations.

Dans le cas spécifique du Lac Tchad, l'absence d'institutions administratives et éducatives solides et adaptées aux réalités locales a pu contribuer à la vulnérabilité de la région aux influences extérieures et aux troubles internes. Les lacunes dans la gouvernance locale et l'éducation peuvent avoir favorisé l'installation et le renforcement de

groupes extrémistes exploitant les frustrations et les lacunes institutionnelles pour recruter des membres et semer la terreur.

Dans une étude ⁽¹²⁾ au Lac Tchad, sur 4142 désengagés et désassociés de Boko Haram présents dans la province du Lac, les raisons de l'engagement sont en rapport direct avec le sous-développement dans une région longtemps délaissée sans administration, ni infrastructures éducatives. On note l'extrême pauvreté, le chômage des jeunes, l'injustice sociale et l'exclusion.

Le sentiment d'abandon exacerbé par l'absence de dématérialisation des services étatiques et de services publics de base (exemple : octroi d'une carte d'identité) : 97% sont sans pièce d'identité. Le niveau d'études des désengagés est alarmant. Les statistiques mettent en évidence une certaine exclusion des désengagés du système scolaire. Plus de 96% sont sans niveau scolaire, plus de 36% souffrent de maladies. Parmi 4142 personnes, il ya un seul bachelier.

Conclusion

Comme je viens de le dire tout au début de ce papier, le sujet est tellement pertinent qu'il est très difficile de le traiter en quelques heures. Sans aucun doute, l'héritage de la colonisation continue à peser lourdement sur les pays du Sahel et d'Afrique en général, entravant parfois leur développement économique, social et politique. Les politiques post-coloniales de la France et d'autres puissances occidentales ont parfois maintenu des relations néocoloniales qui ont limité la souveraineté des pays africains et favorisé des situations où des dirigeants locaux ont été soutenus pour servir



des intérêts étrangers au détriment de leur propre population.

Il est encourageant de constater que la société civile et le milieu intellectuel africain sont de plus en plus engagés dans des débats critiques sur ces enjeux et qu'ils cherchent à promouvoir des partenariats plus équilibrés et bénéfiques pour le développement de l'Afrique. Il est effectivement primordial que les pays africains privilégient leurs propres intérêts dans leurs relations internationales, tout en recherchant une coopération mutuellement avantageuse avec divers acteurs mondiaux.

La coopération avec la Chine, la Russie et d'autres acteurs internationaux offre des opportunités intéressantes pour l'Afrique, mais il est crucial que ces partenariats soient basés sur des principes de transparence, de respect et de bénéfice mutuels. En fin de compte, c'est en renforçant les compétences locales, en favorisant l'implication de la société civile et en promouvant des politiques économiques et sociales inclusives que l'Afrique pourra véritablement devenir le moteur de son propre développement.

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- 1) Patrick Schmol, La guerre demain, les risques de conflit mondial dans les années 80, Editions Réseaux 1983, Paris, P 88, dans « France- Tchad, un partenariat inégalé, Ahmat Yacoub Dabio, Amazon.
- 2) D'ailleurs, le jour même de la cérémonie de l'indépendance au Tchad, il était facile de constater que les deux parties ne parlaient pas le même langage. Pendant que le président tchadien, dans ses discours, exprimait sa joie pour l'indépendance, les deux émissaires français, Foyer et Malraux parlaient l'un et l'autre d'une « République de la Communauté » et d'une « communauté renouvée ». Ahmat Yacoub Dabio, « Les Relations Franco-Tchadiennes », bibliothèque du CEDPE.
- 3) La géoéconomie est l'analyse des stratégies d'ordre économique notamment commercial-visant à protéger et renforcer son potentiel économique et social (selon Pascal Lorot).
- 4) Antoine Gazano, les relations internationales, Edition Gualino, Paris 2001, p23.
- 5) DE L'AMBASSADEUR DE France AU TCHAD AU MINISTERE DE LA COOP. PARIS, LE 30 SEPTEMBRE 1964 N° 702/706. ARCHIVES MAE DAM1 TCHAD, SERIE 3387 CARTON 256 AE 1959-1969 VOL 14.
- 6) Tél. de M. CABOUAT-DIPLOMATIE PARIS, DAAM A L'AMBASSADEUR DE France A FL, REF : TOKYO N° 944/45 DU 9 OCTOBRE 1964. ARCHIVES MAE DAM1 TCHAD, SERIE 3387 CARTON 256 AE 1959-1969 VOL. 14.
- 7) LETTRE DE M. DE COMMINES AMBASSADEUR DE FRANCE A FL DU 16 MAI 1966 NR 327-328 AU SECRETARIAT D'ETAT AUX AE CHARGE DE LA COOP. PARIS, ARCHIVES MAE CARTON 52121 SERIE 3386 DAM1 TCHAD, RFT 1964-1969 VOL.13.
- 8) NOTE DE M. DE COMMINES AMBASSADEUR DE FRANCE A FL DU 31 MARS 1966 N° 195/200 A M. LE SEAE CHARGE DE LA COOPERATION, PARIS. ARCHIVES MAE CARTON 52121 SERIE 3386 DAM1 TCHAD, RFT 1964-1969 VOL. 13.
- 9) 113 NOTE DE M. DE COMMINES AMBASSADEUR DE FRANCE A FL DU 07MARS 1967 N° 108/111 A M. LE SEAE CHARGE DE LA COOPERATION, PARIS. ARCHIVES MAE CARTON 52121 SERIE 3386 DAM1 TCHAD, RFT 1964-1969 VOL. 13.
- 10) 114 TEL. DE M. DE COMMINES AMBASSADEUR DE FRANCE A FL DU 26 mai 1967 NR 278/80 A M. BOURGES SEAE
- 11) TEL. DE M. DE COMMINES AMBASSADEUR DE FRANCE A FL DU 10 JUILLET 1967 NOS 335/339 A M. SEAE.
- 12) Effectuée par le CEDPE en septembre 2019.



**SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH PAPER:
THE ANTICIPATED RUSSIAN ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT
OF SAHEL COUNTRIES AMID MUTUAL GAINS AND
ECONOMIC CHALLENGES**



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«China has emerged as a prominent partner for the Sahel countries in terms of both exports and imports. This indicates a substantial alignment between these countries and China, with many experts anticipating an increase in trade volumes between China and the Sahel countries in the future.»

This study examines the investment opportunities available in the African Sahel countries in cooperation with Russia, with a focus on the agriculture, minerals, energy, and human capital sectors. The region is rich in vast natural resources, including minerals, oil, and gas, in addition to fertile agricultural land, offering Russian investors the opportunity to benefit from strategic investments in infrastructure and technology development within these sectors, thereby enhancing productivity and food security.

The study also highlights the importance of human capital in the Sahel countries, characterized by a young population. It emphasizes the potential role that Russian investments in education and training can play in enhancing skills and improving economic productivity. Furthermore, the study stresses the urgent need to improve the education and healthcare sectors in the region, which suffer from significant weaknesses. A partnership with Russia could contribute to raising healthcare and education standards, thus promoting social stability and reducing developmental gaps.

With regard to the high unemployment rates in the region, the study suggests expanding the Russian partnership with the Sahel countries to create new job opportunities through investment in emerging industries and infrastructure development. It also provides an analysis of the trade relations of the Sahel countries, noting that 2023 data indicates the European Union, particularly Switzerland, as a strong trade partner for the region. At the same time, China emerges as a major trading partner, while the roles of Russia and the United States have diminished. Interestingly, despite the strong historical ties between France and the Sahel countries, France is no longer the leading economic partner, though its companies continue to be active in certain economic sectors. The study concludes that the African Sahel countries possess significant economic potential that can be enhanced through strategic partnerships with Russia, aimed at supporting sustainable development in the region by investing in both natural and human resources.

Main topics:

- Introduction

I. The Investment Opportunities Available to the Russian Partner in the African Sahel Countries

II. Development of Vital Sectors in the Sahel Countries Amid the Russian-African Partnership

III. An Analytical Perspective on the Key Trade Partners of the African Sahel Countries

IV. Recommendations

- Conclusion

- References

¹ The original research in Arabic, containing a detailed study of the African franc, is available in the Arabic report of the symposium “The Impact of Western Influence on the Economy and Development in the Sahel Region”, ACESS Research Center (www.acress.org).



Introduction

The Sahel countries are among the regions with immense potential for economic development, given their abundant natural resources and a growing youthful population. However, these nations face significant challenges that hinder the effective utilization of their potential, including inadequate infrastructure, deteriorating healthcare and education services, and high unemployment rates. Amid these challenges, partnerships with Russia emerge as one of the promising avenues to stimulate economic growth and develop key sectors. By enhancing Russian investments in energy, agriculture, and minerals, along with investing in human capital, this partnership could transform the Sahel into a highly competi-

tive region on the global stage. This study aims to analyze these investment opportunities and identify the strengths that could drive development forward through partnership with Russia.

I. The Investment Opportunities Available to the Russian Partner in the African Sahel Countries

a. Agriculture Sector

The Sahel countries discussed in this study are among the largest in terms of land area within the African continent, with all of them exceeding one million square kilometers, with the exception of Burkina Faso. Figure 1 illustrates the land areas of these countries, which collectively account for 17% of the total area of Africa.

Figure No. 1: Sahel Countries land areas

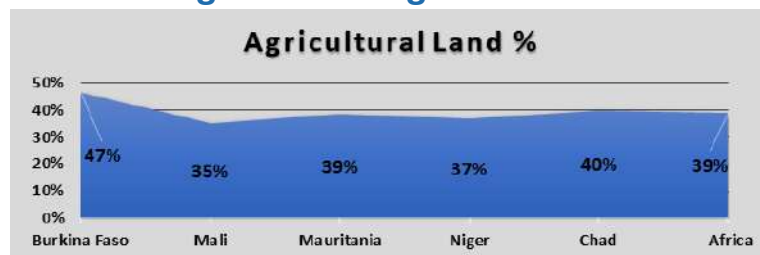


Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the Sahel countries database

The average agricultural land constitutes 39% of the total land area in these countries, which is equivalent to the average agricultural land area across the African continent, what makes this percentage particularly significant for the Sahel coun-

tries is their vast land size, the total agricultural land area in these countries is approximately 1,925,140 square kilometers, meaning that investment in agriculture within these nations would be highly beneficial, this is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure No. 2: Agricultural land

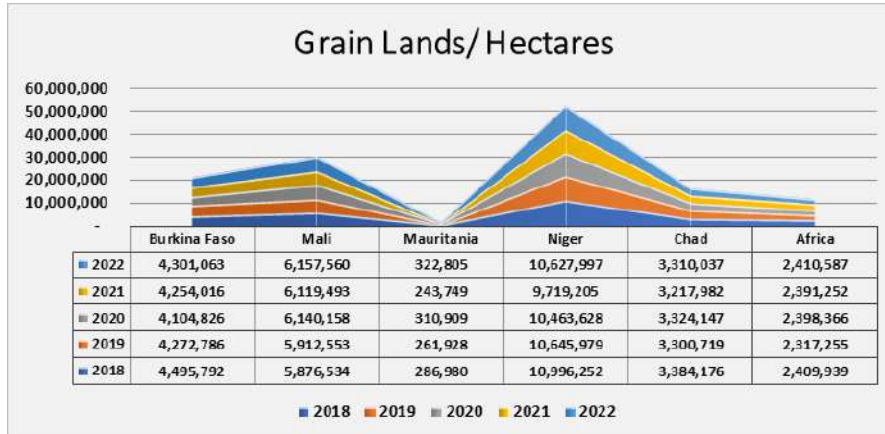


Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the World Bank database

Cereals are considered the most important agricultural commodity among agricultural products, as they are essential and irreplaceable in the global food basket, according to Figure 3, the Sahel countries are characterized by an abundance of land

dedicated to this type of farming, with all countries surpassing the African continent average, except for Mauritania, the proportion of such land is likely to increase with the implementation of modern land reclamation techniques.

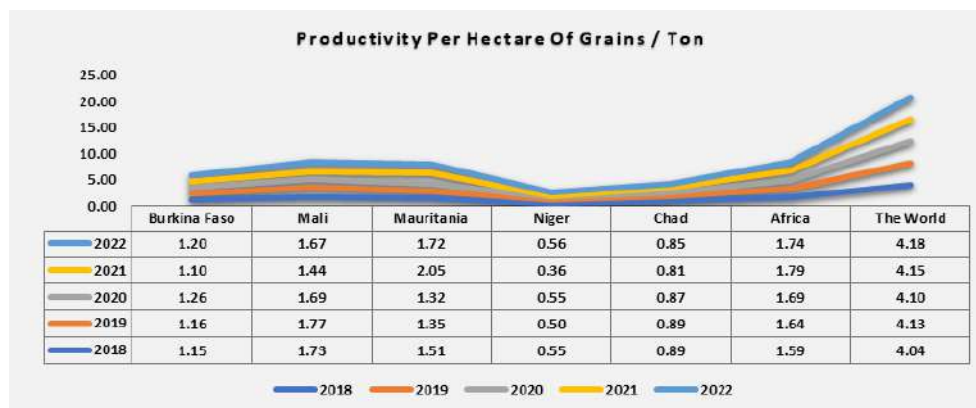
Figure No. 3: Grain Lands



Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the World Bank database

Figure 4 shows the yield per hectare of cereals in metric tons, it reveals that the yield per hectare is lower than both the African and global averages, this is attributed to the use of outdated methods in cereal cultivation, with the introduction of investments that provide modern technology, it is expected that the yield per hectare will significantly increase.

Figure No. 4: yield per hectare of cereals in metric tons

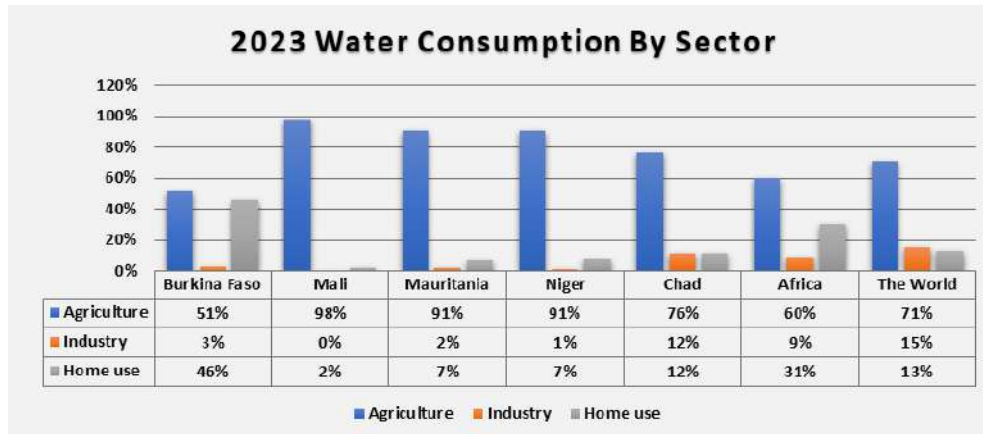


Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the World Bank database

Figure 5 shows that the largest portion of water used is allocated to agriculture. This leads to the conclusion that the citizens of these countries rely primarily on agricultural work. Additionally, the excessive use of water in agriculture is due to the lack of modern irrigation technologies. This underscores the importance of investing in agriculture in these countries, which would help reduce water consumption significantly while greatly increasing agricultural output.



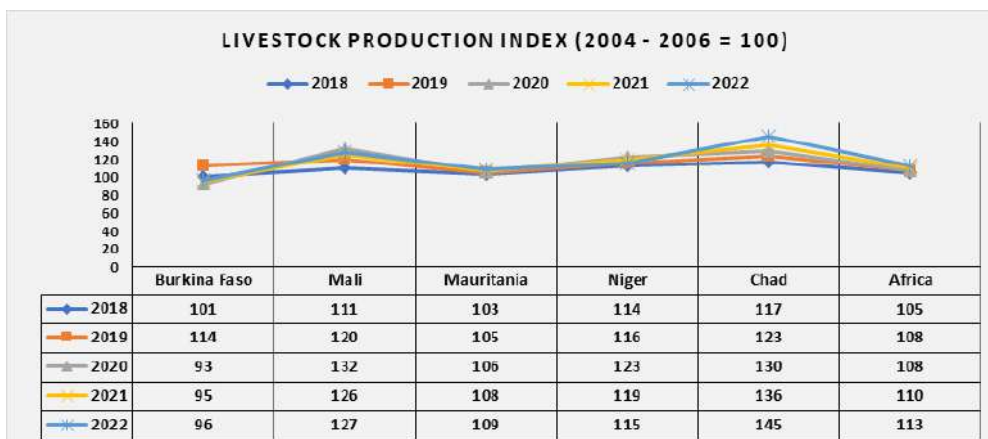
Figure No. 5: Water Consumption



Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the World Bank database

Figure 6, which refers to the livestock production index published by the World Bank, encompasses the production of meat and dairy from all sources, including dairy products such as cheese, eggs, honey, natural silk, wool, and hides, the figure demonstrates that these countries are experiencing steady growth in livestock production compared to the reference year (2004-2006), which is set at 100%.

Figure No. 6: livestock production



Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the World Bank database

b. Mineral Sector

Tables 1 through 5 represent the major mineral resources extracted from the Sahel countries in recent years, based on available data.

Table No. 1

Burkina Faso						
Metal	Unit of Measurement	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Gold	Ton	35.2	38.1	46.2	36	45
Silver	Ton	12.4	22	6	1	1
Lead	Ton	2,500	-	-	-	-
Manganese	Ton	50,000	-	-	-	-
Zinc	Ton	124,000	77,800	64,459	64,000	64,000
Cement, Hydraulic	metric ton	263,200	300,000	300,000	310,000	310,000

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the United States Geological Survey database

Burkina Faso is distinguished by its extraction of substantial quantities of gold, as well as zinc and cement, according to Table 1.

Table No. 2

Mali						
Metal	Unit of Measurement	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Gold	Ton	40.9	41.4	46.5	55	61
Cement, Hydraulic	metric ton	630,000	630,000	630,000	660,000	660,000

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the United States Geological Survey database

Mali is one of the world's top producers of gold, making the country an attractive destination for foreign investment. This is because gold plays a crucial role as a major source in stabilizing currency exchange rates.

Table No. 3

Mauritania						
Metal	Unit of Measurement	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Gold	Ton	9.1	9.235	14.484	19.725	8.1
Copper	Ton	28,791	28,137	29,620	28,491	18,845
Iron	metric ton	11,714,000	10,711,000	12,200,000	12,515,000	12,809,000
Gypsum	Ton	200,000	200,000	250,000	200,000	200,000
Cement, Hydraulic	metric ton	850,000	1,023,000	1,000,000	970,000	998,000

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the United States Geological Survey database

Mauritania is distinguished by its vast and diverse mineral wealth, with iron ore being particularly notable, the country is one of the major exporters of iron ore, in addition to having significant deposits of gold, cement, and copper.

Table No. 4

Niger						
Metal	Unit of Measurement	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Gold	Ton	0.7	1.2	1	1	1
Silver	Ton	0.07	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12
Coal, bituminous	Ton	255,936	221,024	246,631	233,792	221,580
Uranium	Ton	4,057	4,115	3,477	3,485	2,910
Cement, Hydraulic	metric ton	21,052	50,531	51,000	51,000	52,000

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the United States Geological Survey database

Niger is endowed with numerous mineral resources, but its most notable asset is uranium. Uranium is one of the most important and scarce minerals, used in the construction of both civilian and military nuclear reactors.

Table No. 5

Chad						
Metal	Unit of Measurement	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Cement, Hydraulic	metric ton	350,000	370,000	410,000	390,000	510,000

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the United States Geological Survey database



c. Energy Sector

Petroleum Energy

(The energy produced by the Sahel countries based on published data)

Although Niger produces between 6 to 7 million barrels of oil annually, this quantity is a crucial foundation for the development of the country's energy sector, investing in Niger's energy sector represents a unique opportunity due to its significant growth and expansion potential, which allows investors to benefit from technological advancements aimed at improving extraction efficiency and increasing production.

Table No. 6

Niger						
Metal	Unit of Measurement	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Crude	bbl	6,256,000	5,459,000	6,014,000	6,665,000	6,065,000

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the United States Geological Survey database

Chad is an emerging investment destination in the energy sector, producing approximately 43 million barrels of oil annually, this substantial production has established Chad as a significant player in the regional oil market, creating broad opportunities for investment in oil exploration and energy infrastructure development.

Recently Discovered Energy Resources in the Sahel Countries:

Table No. 7

Chad						
Metal	Unit of Measurement	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Crude	bbl	35,920,000	42,159,000	46,310,000	46,200,000	42,500,000

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the United States Geological Survey database

Although the new oil discoveries in Chad, totaling 270 million barrels, may seem limited compared to global reserves, they are equivalent to the country's usual production for six years. This underscores the strategic significance of these discoveries, suggesting that Chad may be on the brink of even larger oil finds in the future.

Table No. 8

Chad			
Discovery Zone	Fuel description	Unit of Measurement	Estimated Quantity
Baobab	crude oil	million bbl	153.2
Oryx	crude oil	million bbl	37
Kome	crude oil	million bbl	32.44
Raphia	crude oil	million bbl	8.3
Lenea	crude oil	million bbl	7.5
Daniela	crude oil	million bbl	3.6
Prosopis	crude oil	million bbl	23.4
Miandoum	crude oil	million bbl	3
Badila	crude oil	million bbl	1.2
Total crude oil		million bbl	270

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the Global Energy Observatory (GEM) database

Mauritania is a country with immense potential in the energy sector, having discovered over 3 trillion cubic meters of gas and more than 1.7 billion barrels of oil. These substantial figures represent a unique opportunity to attract international investments in this strategic sector.

Table No. 9

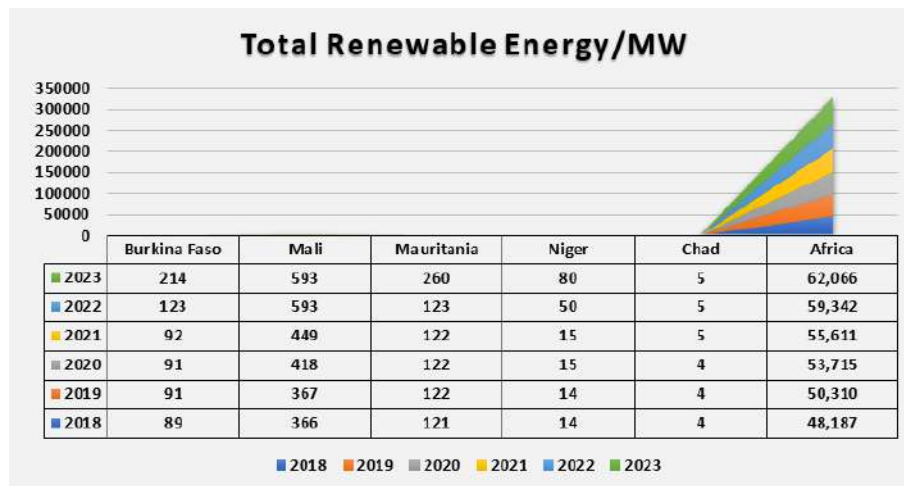
Mauritania			
Discovery Zone	Fuel description	Unit of Measurement	Estimated Quantity
BirAllah	Gas	billion m ³	2.7
Banda	Gas	billion m ³	0.028
Tortue	Gas	billion m ³	0.32
BirAllah	crude oil	million bbl	182
Tortue	crude oil	million bbl	226
Orca	crude oil	million boe	1300
Total Gas		trillion m ³	3.048
Total crude oil		billion bbl	1.71

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the Global Energy Observatory (GEM) database

Renewable Energy

Referring to Figure 7, it is evident that the Sahel countries in Africa produce limited amounts of renewable energy, with the volumes generated being significantly modest compared to the overall production of the African continent, it should be noted that Africa as a whole has only recently shifted towards renewable energy production; however, the growth rate in renewable energy output for the Sahel countries is notably lower when compared to the growth rates observed across the rest of the African continent.

Figure No. 7: Renewable Energy

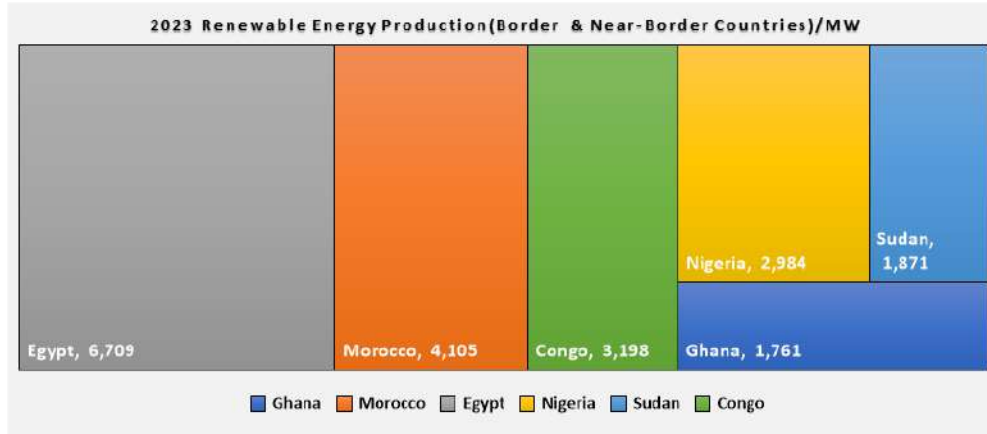


Source: Prepared by the researcher based on The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) Database

The Sahel countries in Africa enjoy a diverse geography and climate that enable them to produce substantial amounts of renewable energy, sufficient not only to meet local demand but also to export surplus energy abroad, given Russia's competitive advantage in manufacturing renewable energy technologies, investments by Russian companies in this sector would be highly profitable, these investments in renewable energy would position the Sahel

countries as a regional and international energy hub, figure 8 illustrates the quantities of energy that border and near-border countries of the Sahel have begun to produce, providing investors with a clear indication of the favorable conditions that ensure the success of investments in this sector.

Figure No. 8: 2023 Renewable Energy Production of Neighbor African Countries

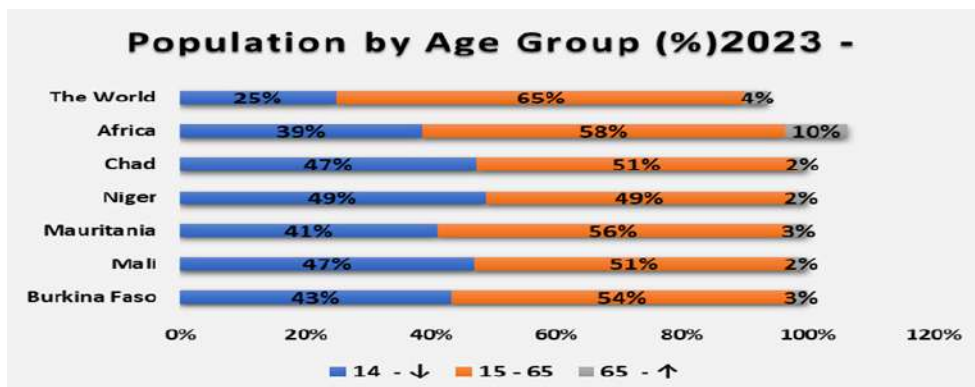


Source: Prepared by the researcher based on The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) Database

d. Potential Markets

This youthful demographic represents a vast consumer market. If these countries achieve genuine and comprehensive economic development, this upcoming generation will become a major driver of local and regional economic growth, particularly if accompanied by economic advancements that enhance the economic rationality of these young people. The significance of this market is further emphasized by the declining population numbers and increasing aging rates in developed countries.

Figure No. 9: Population in Sahel Countries



Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the World Bank database

e. Strategic Geographical Location

From Figure 10, it is evident that the Sahel countries in Africa are situated at the heart of the world, acting as a bridge between the Old World comprising the three continents of (Africa, Asia, and Europe) and the New World, which includes North America, South Amer-

ica, and Oceania. Through the shores of Mauritania on the Atlantic Ocean, access can be gained to the Americas, and via Chad, passing through Libya and reaching Egypt, the path to Asia and Europe can be opened. Therefore, Egypt is a crucial partner for any investor in the Sahel countries, as it serves as the connecting point between the Sahel and the continents of Asia and Europe. This is due to Egypt's possession of the Suez Canal, which links the Red Sea with the Mediterranean, in addition to providing an alternative route to Asia through its border with the continent, as well as its Mediterranean shores offering access to Europe. If an agreement is reached between the Sahel countries, Russia, Egypt, and Libya, the land route stretching from Mauritania to Egypt could become an integral part of China's Belt and Road Initiative, linking the world through a vital and comprehensive trade corridor.

Figure No. 10: Strategic Geographical Location of Sahel Countries



Source: Prepared by the researcher

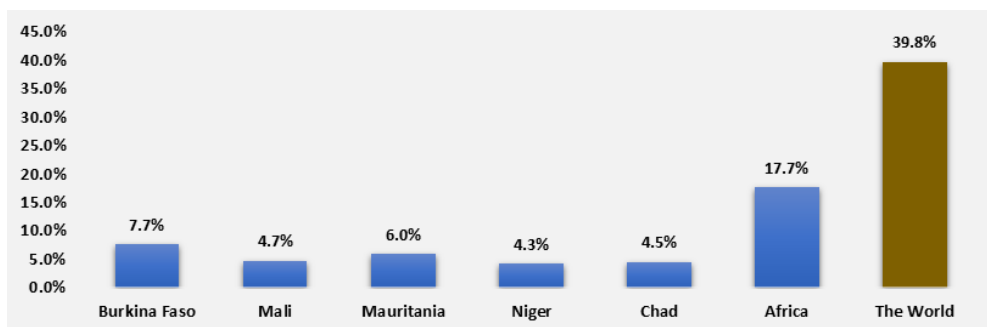
II. Development of Vital Sectors in the Sahel Countries Amid the Russian-African Partnership

a. Education Sector

Figure 11 represents the percentage of university enrollment, showing that Sahel countries have very low rates compared to the global and African averages. This, in turn, impacts the supply of skilled labor to the local market, which is crucial for achieving effective economic development.

Figure 12 shows that the expenditure on education by Sahel countries is approximately equal to the global average expenditure.

Figure No. 11: 2020 Tertiary Education Enrollment Rate

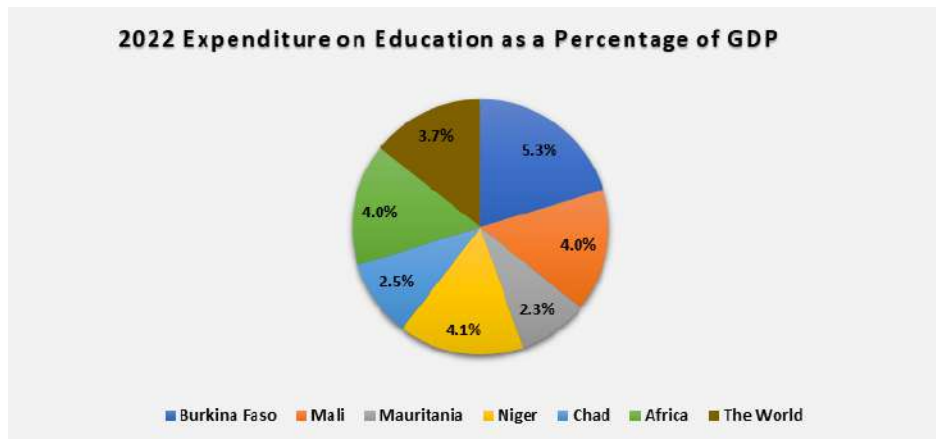


Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the World Bank database



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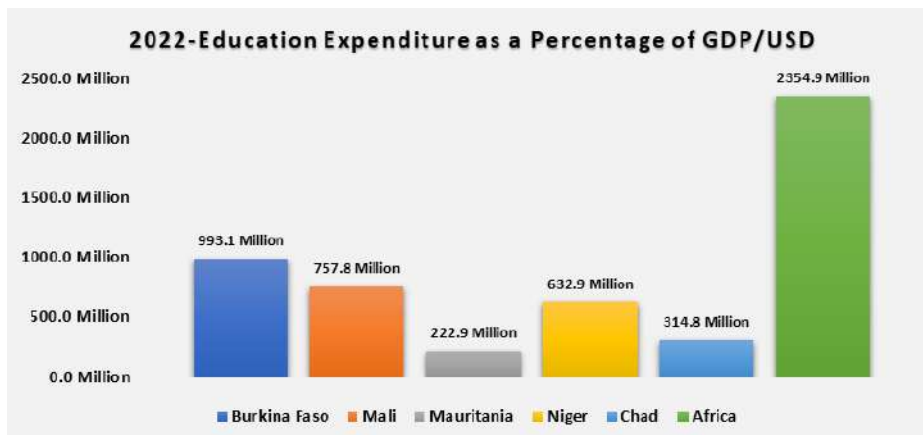
Figure No. 12: Expenditure on Education as a Percentage of GDP



Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the World Bank database

However, these percentages do not reflect the true situation, as the GDP in these countries is among the lowest globally, consequently, this creates a gap between the actual amounts spent on education and the apparent percentages, referring to Figure 13, it is evident that education expenditure as a percentage of GDP in Sahel countries is significantly lower than the average education expenditure in the African continent.

Figure No. 13: 2022-Education Expenditure as a Percentage of GDP/USD



Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the World Bank database

Table No. 10

Data on the Health Situation				
Number of dentists, Physicians, Nursing, pharmacists (per 10,000 population)				
Country	Dentists	Physicians	Nursing	pharmacists
Burkina Faso	0.02	1.50	10.30	0.25
Mali	0.02	1.90	3.52	0.76
Mauritania	0.28	2.40	16.60	0.18
Niger	0.01	0.23	2.02	0.02
Chad	0.01	0.85	2.10	0.09
The World	3.30	17.00	37.70	4.80

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the World Health Organization (WHO) database

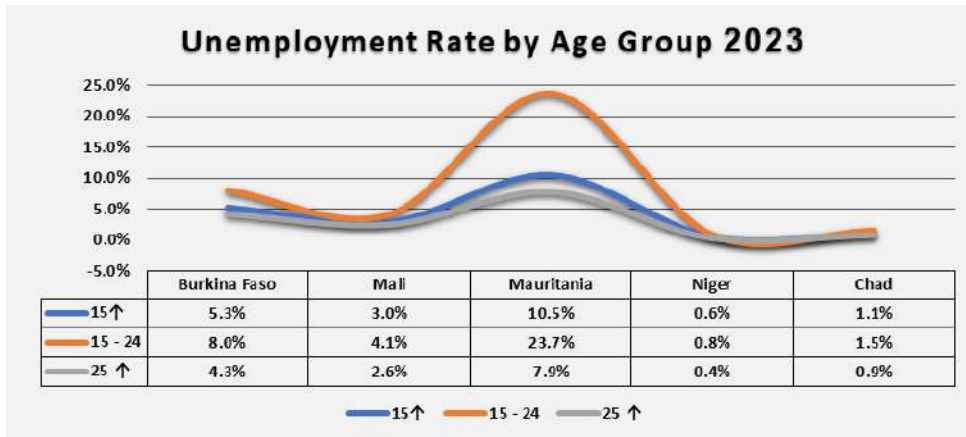
b. Healthcare Sector

Table 10 indicates the deterioration of healthcare infrastructure in the Sahel countries compared to the global average, the healthcare sector is a crucial foundation for providing a safe environment for investments, as well as achieving social stability, which is essential for driving economic development.

c. Unemployment

Mauritania has the highest unemployment rates among the Sahel countries, reaching up to 24%, conversely, the lower unemployment rates in other Sahel countries do not necessarily indicate a strong economy, instead, this is often due to the fact that a significant portion of the population in these countries works within family-run activities in livestock and agriculture.

Figure No. 14: Unemployment Rate in Sahel Countries



Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the International Labor Organization (ILO) database

III. An Analytical Perspective on the Key Trade Partners of the African Sahel Countries

The figures below represent the trade volumes with the main trading partners only (the top 13 trading partners for each country) and do not include all countries worldwide. It is important to note that this list of key trading partners accounts for a significant portion of these countries' exports and imports.

Figure No. 15: Burkina Faso Export / Import Destinations

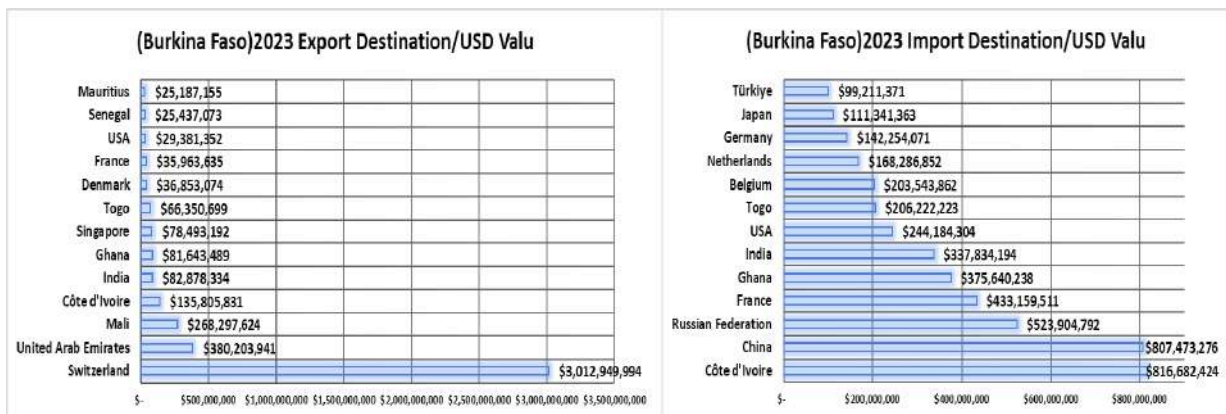


Figure No. 16: Mali Export / import Destinations

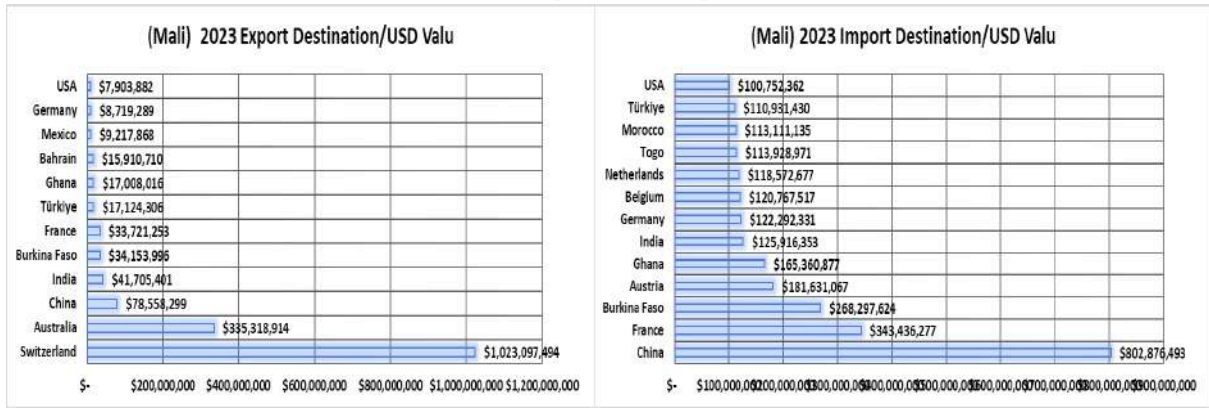


Figure No. 17: Mauritania Export / import Destinations

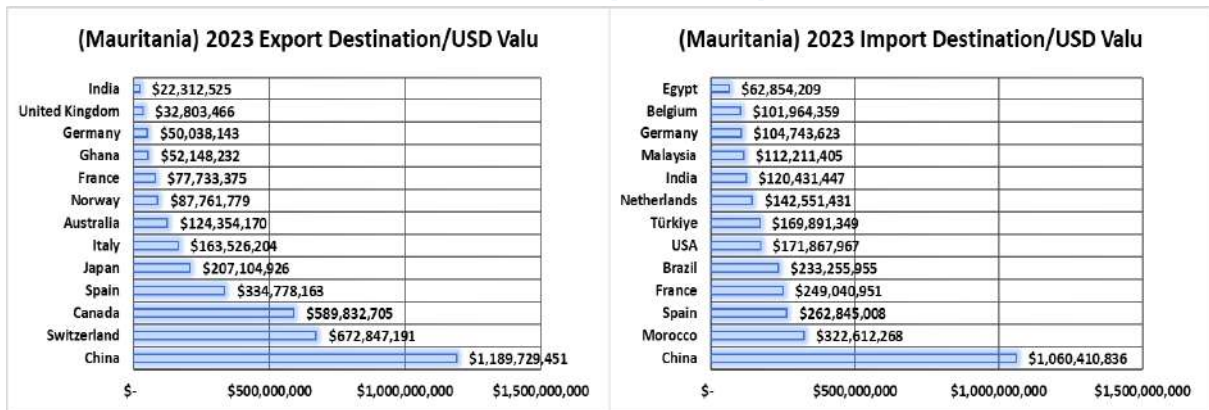


Figure No. 18: Niger Export / import Destinations



Figure No. 19: Chad Export / import Destinations

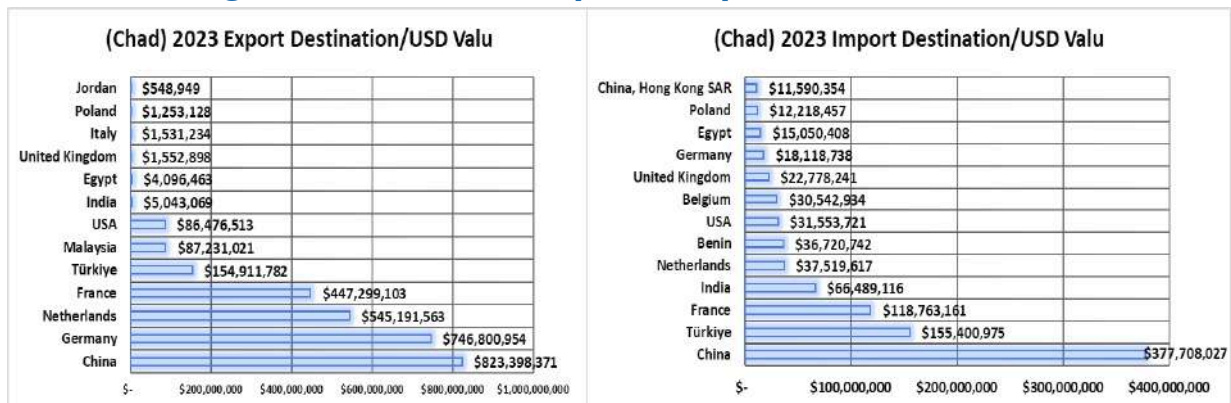
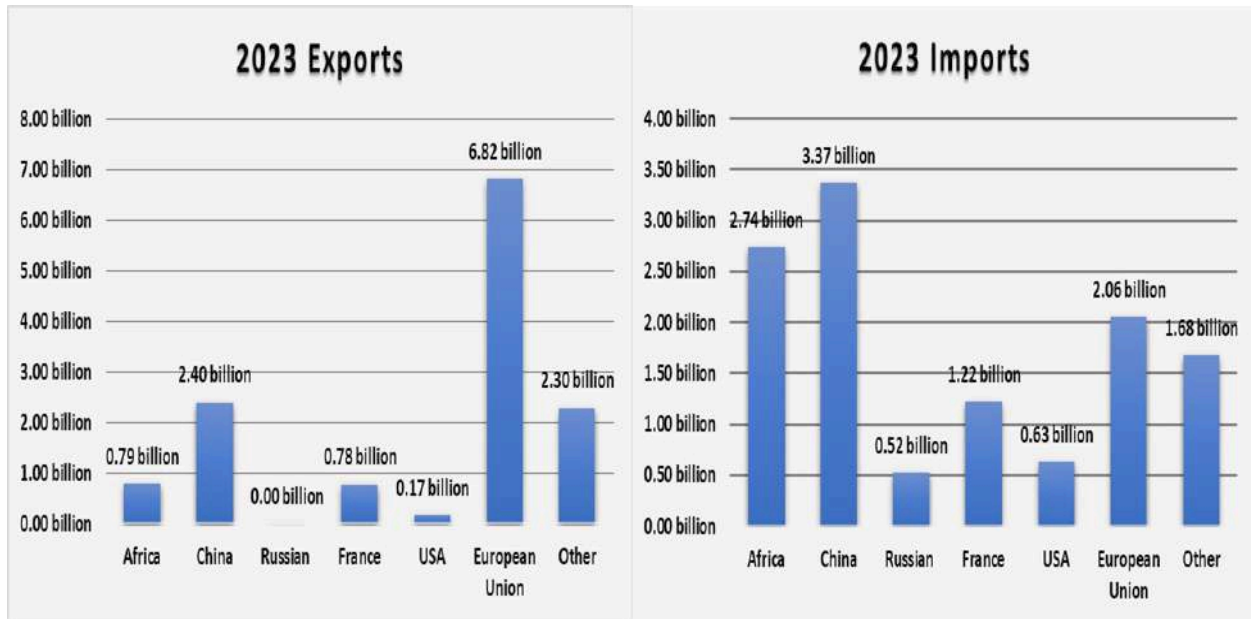


Figure No. 20: Important Partners for Sahel Countries

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the United Nations database

Figure 20 provides a summary of Figures 15 to 19, consolidating the values of the most important partners. The key points observed are as follows:

- **Weak Trade Relations with the African Continent:** The figures above illustrate that trade between the Sahel countries and African nations does not align with the scale of the resources available in these countries.

- **Significant Presence of China as a Strong Partner:** China has emerged as a prominent partner for the Sahel countries in terms of both exports and imports. This indicates a substantial alignment between these countries and China, with many experts anticipating an increase in trade volumes between China and the Sahel countries in the future.

- **Strong Trade Relations with the European Union:** There is robust trade between the European Union and the Sahel countries, particularly with Switzerland, which was the largest partner for the Sahel countries in 2023. Switzerland imported over \$3

billion from Burkina Faso in 2023 and nearly \$700 million from Mauritania in the same year.

- **France's Limited Role as a Prominent Partner:** According to the data presented in the figures above, France does not appear as a leading partner. This prompts a consideration of whether exports to France are treated as international or domestic exports.

- **Absence of Russia Among Key Partners:** Russia is not among the key partners for the Sahel countries, necessitating increased Russian investment in the Sahel and a strengthened partnership with these nations.

IV. Key Recommendations:

1. Collaborate with the Russian partner to introduce modern agricultural technologies to enhance agricultural production, achieve food security, and ensure mutual benefits.

2. Negotiate energy contracts with Russian



and global energy companies on equitable terms to secure high returns for the Sahel countries, contributing to their genuine development.

3. Link the precious minerals of these countries to their reserves to ensure monetary stability.
4. Develop a comprehensive plan with the Russian partner to allocate a portion of investment returns towards improving infrastructure in the education and healthcare sectors, as well as in general services.
5. Focus not only on extracting resources but also on establishing local manufacturing industries in the Sahel countries to alleviate unemployment challenges.
6. Open up to Egypt and North African countries due to their qualified personnel with reasonable wages and cultural similarities with the Sahel countries. This approach can help drive development in the Sahel region.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is evident that the Sahel countries have immense potential for economic growth if their natural and human resources are optimally utilized, partnerships with Russia offer a unique opportunity to achieve this growth, such partnerships could boost investment in key sectors like agriculture, energy, and minerals, contributing to infrastructure development and sustainable growth, additionally, investing in human capital is crucial for improving education and healthcare, and reducing high unemployment rates, which in turn enhances social and economic stability in the region, with existing strong trade partnerships between the Sahel countries and Russia, there is potential for significant mutual benefits, the real challenge lies in developing effective strategies to ensure the sustainability of these partnerships and maximize the benefits for the Sahel countries on their path to comprehensive development.

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IMPACT OF WESTERN INFLUENCE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF SAHEL REGION IN AFRICA: EMERGING POSITION OF FRANCE



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«All ECOWAS Member States, including the 3 Sahel countries of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, that want to depart from the regional integration will be negatively affected to some extent.»

A. Background to Issues in the Sahel Africa

Countries in the Sahel region in Africa (spreading from Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad) suffers from a long history of political instability and armed conflicts. Since gaining its independence in the 1960s, countries in Sahel have faced challenges of state-building; which most of them inherited from France, their colonial master. In many of these countries, governing institutions left behind by French government have proved to be difficult to manage.

Terrorist groups now control large parts of this region and are fighting government forces over resources that are important to the global economy, not just the national one, such as cobalt, which is used in electronics including mobile phones, or lithium, which is used in batteries, and most importantly, the struggle to control gold mines. Despite long-standing international and regional efforts to counter these groups, they are expanding their presence within the Sahel, penetrating further south into the northern parts of several countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (1).

This cause more deterioration of humanitarian situation, the head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel reported in 2023 as a result of armed conflicts roughly 2.7 million people have been displaced and 1.6 million children are malnourished (2). Unfortunately, Regional and international mechanisms have all failed to prevent instability from spreading. may be because the MINUSMA's mandate was narrow, focusing on efforts to support the implementation of a peace and reconciliation agreement in Mali and providing security for UN officials working in the country (3).

B. Monetary Dependency of the Sahel Countries.

Recently, there has been much criticism against the continued use of the CFA franc currency for a long period after political independence. Initially, this cooperation was seen as essentially beneficial to all its member states. However, a number of radical young scholars (mostly Africans) have boldly criticized this cooperation and the system followed through some in-depth and well-documented studies and analyses (4).

Confirming through these studies that the current monetary dependence due to the use of the African franc has created economic dependence in the countries of Central and West Africa on the old colonizer. **Economic dependence means, “a situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected”** (5). The relation of interdependence between two or more economies, and between these and world trade, assumes the form of dependence when the dominant countries can expand and can be self-sustaining, while the dependent countries can do this only as a reflection of that expansion, which can have either a positive or a negative effect on their immediate development.

In particular, financial and monetary dependence is one of the essential elements of this economic dependence, and many consider it unacceptable. Financial and monetary independence is a crucial element of any country's sovereignty, because the ability to control and possess the national currency is one of the essential features of national sovereignty.

When the CFA franc was created in December 1945 after the French government rati-



fied the Bretton Woods Agreement and CFA became the currency of the French colonies in Africa, the stated purpose of this currency and the system followed in it was to guarantee the currency of the franc in international markets, and at the same time to prevent overdrafts and limit inflation in the member states. Between the early 1950s and the mid-1980s, CFA franc countries had stronger real GDP growth and lower inflation than other sub-Saharan African countries. For example, within the past 50 years, Côte d'Ivoire experienced an average inflation rate of 6%—a much lower rate than its neighbor Ghana, which averaged 29% inflation (6).

The challenge of implementing effective monetary policies to achieve growth and stability across Africa has led to years of debate about the CFA franc zone not only among scholars and experts but also among African leaders themselves, many of whom supported its continuation while others sought to find a way to separate France and French-speaking African countries in terms of currency to end monetary dependency. Côte d'Ivoire President Alassane Ouattara has in the recent past contended that CFA zone countries are better off than Anglophone countries due to growth and low inflation, whereas the poor are disproportionately affected by unpredictable inflation in Anglophone countries (7).

In terms of trade, the CFA's fixed exchange rate to the euro has led to a greater facilitation of trade through the reduction of uncertainty and stabilization of domestic prices. The potential problems with a fixed exchange rate are mostly offset in Central African Economic and Monetary Union (CAEMU) countries, due to these countries' high levels of excess liquidity from oil revenues. However, West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) countries have experienced declining liquidity since 2004, thus suffering from the volatility of a fixed rate

amidst external shocks.

While opponents of the continuation of the CFA franc argue that ideally, member states of the same monetary union should coordinate their fiscal policies in order to address shocks occurring in different areas of the union and address their effects. However, such coordination does not occur in the CFA franc area. Thus, the continuation of the CFA franc as a whole has led to:

- High dependence on producing and exporting a limited number of primary
- Limited intra-regional trade, especially in Central Africa.
- A high vulnerability to external shocks.
- commodities.
- A narrow industrial base.

In addition, to the fact that focus on primary commodities and limited intra-regional trade are broadly reflective of CFA franc member countries' lack of export diversification and low industrialization.

Anti-CFA franc movements have also emerged in Africa, such as Y'en a Marre in Senegal and Le Balai Citoyen in Burkina Faso, both of which see the dismantling of the CFA franc zone as essential to reforming their governments. Another supporter of this movement is the French activist born in Benin, Kemi Seba, who was accused of burning CFA franc banknotes in Senegal before being deported (8).

In the face of this ongoing debate between supporters and opponents of the African franc, especially with the insistence of the African elite and the wealthy, the main beneficiaries of the African franc, on the importance of continuing this system, a number of experts have identified the legal, political and economic consequences of the African franc for African member states in two main objective facts:

- **First:** It appears that there is legal equality,

while in reality there is a situation of inequality between France and its African partners who are members of the CFA franc. Through this currency mechanism, these countries have delegated all their monetary and financial responsibilities to France in what amounts to a voluntary renunciation of sovereignty. France has effectively been entrusted with the power to make decisions, manage and monitor the economic policies of African countries.

Second, the “**unlimited convertibility**” mechanism is seen as a purely hypothetical guarantee; so far, such a guarantee has never been tested. This mechanism in fact links the African franc and the euro (formerly the French franc) closely, and as a result, the chronic difficulties that the French franc previously suffered and the euro now are automatically transferred to the African franc. It is now clear that accumulating foreign exchange reserves in the French Treasury and the French Central Bank through the “unlimited convertibility” mechanism is more beneficial to France than to the African countries concerned.

Therefore, the voices of some African presidents began to rise in talking about the importance of breaking this link and striving to achieve financial independence for the African franc countries. Chad’s President Idriss Deby said back in 2015 that the CFA as “pulling African economies down,” and that “time has come to cut the cordon that prevent Africa to develop.” He called for a restructuring of the currency in order to “enable African countries which are still using it to develop.” (9). Also, in 2019, the President of Benin, Patrice Talon said in an interview that the Francophone nations in West Africa want take more control over their CFA franc currency and plan to move some of their reserves away from France. It is important to note that any restructuring of the CFA franc will have radical macro-economic impacts that require increased

public investment and provision of basic goods, attractive investment policies, development assistance, and resource mobilization. Therefore, if the Sahel countries want to get out of this monetary dependency and break the link to the African franc, they must do a comprehensive analyses and studies that take into account all the expected reactions, whether at the economic or political level, and the consequences that may result, which may severely affect the economies of those countries, if this process is not carried out with great care.

C. Issues in the Split of Political and Economic Integration in Sahel

The split between ECOWAS and the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) is not a good development for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). With the inauguration of the newfangled AES in the Nigerien capital, Niamey, in July 2024, the breach between the ECOWAS and the three countries in the region: Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger would seem to be irreparable. The three leaders of AES said that ECOWAS “fallen under the influence of foreign powers” and “become a threat to member states and peoples.” Also, they accused ECOWAS of abandoning them in confronting and eliminating terrorism, putting them under tremendous political stress.

Some has been blaming the ECOWAS either for not doing enough to pacify the Sahelian countries, or outright alienating them by imposing sanctions on Niger in the aftermath of the July 2023 coup d’état and insisting on a quick return to democracy in all three. For instance, Adama Gaye, a one-time Director of Communications of ECOWAS Commission responsible for the withdrawal of the AES countries by nagging them to hold free and fair elections. (10). The exit of the three Sahel countries (with a combined population of 72 million) from ECOWAS could have unfortunate conse-



quences for ECOWAS, which has been one of Africa's most successful economic integration blocs. ECOWAS is undoubtedly better and stronger with these countries, which is why ECOWAS continues to send mediators to the dissidents to make it clear that the door is open for them to return if any of them change their decision.

Also, ECOWAS lifted travel, commercial and economic sanctions. but the AES states still maintain their stand at the Summit in Niamey; to save its sovereignty, and political as well as economic independence.

D. Presence of Russia should be Towards Economic Development

Of recent, Russia is making more gains through bilateral deals into African states, particularly in the Sahel region; but this should not lead into a global proxy conflict with the West. Under AfCFTA, what after needs now is development not allying with global powers. recently, Russia's re-connection with Africa in general and with Sahel countries particularly was accelerated, challenging the influence of traditional powers. Now, Russia is a new favorite partner for AES countries which split from ECOWAS. Russia warned ECOWAS against using military measures in Niger after 2023 coup. the growing presence of Russia shouldn't see as a risk many other African countries are having such relationship, and its increasing footprint may help Africa's international relations with new and traditional partners. Recently, many global powers are seeking to increase relationship with Africa, but the African countries, should avoid being used or becoming a belligerent in a proxy global crisis.

E. Presentations

There were two sessions of presentations.

First, Analysis of the Monetary Dependency and Subordination of the Sahel Countries. The second session focussed on the Expected Role of Russia in Sahel; as discussed above.

F. My Comments

On the first and second sessions of presentations, my comments are as follows:

- The 3 countries in ECOWAS that want to exit from the economic integration pact have the right to have economic relationships with any part of the world, including Russia, based of self-determination principle of UN.

- In line with ECOWAS Heads of State Summit decision, the 3 countries (Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger) in the region that desires to break away should reconsider their decisions and still maintain their positions in the region; they were members from the beginning of the establishment of the economic integration in 1975.

- The 3 countries should however, remember that based on the **Vienna Convention, Law of Treaties, of 1969, the pacta sunt servanda** (agreements must be kept) must be obeyed as appropriate; without this principle, which is explicitly mentioned in many agreements, treaties would be neither binding nor enforceable; and these three countries have signed many agreements with ECOWAS, African Union (AU), UEMOA, and the WTO.

- The complete breaking away should reconsider the implications on their economy, individual and corporate citizens of the region with whom there had been substantial integration of businesses, sub contractual and outsourcing arrangements, as well as vertical forward and backward integration of economic activities.

- Like many other development partners countries in ECOWAS, Russia can collaborate not only with the 3 countries that are breaking away from ECOWAS; but it (Russia) can extend its helping hand to all other African countries; particularly under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) initiative

- In African Economic Community (AEC) Treaty of 1991, only 8 Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are recognized in Africa; which of the RECs will the 3 countries join to still be part of AEC is not yet deter-

mined, and AU may not yet be positioned to increase the RECs beyond 8 groupings.

- All ECOWAS Member States, including the 3 Sahel countries of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, that want to depart from the regional integration will be negatively affected to some extent based on the points stated above.

- Russia should be welcome to all other ECOWAS States as development partner in agriculture, investment, infrastructural development among others.



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WESTERN INFLUENCE IN THE SAHEL AND ITS IMPACT ON ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT: OBSERVATIONS AND DIMENSIONS



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«In our view, the African countries in general, and the Sahel countries in particular, have been hit by three basic curses that have hampered their capabilities of movement and action: the curse of borders, the curse of resources, and the curse of corruption.»



After appreciating the topic of the panel discussion and the topics raised, the most important points of commentary can be summarized as follows:

First: With regard to the papers submitted, there is a kind of support and interdependence between the topics raised, as the papers of Dr. Mohammed Al-Tamawy and Dr. Omar Bastanji gave a detailed presentation of the economic capabilities and potential of the Sahel countries, the strengths and imbalances related to those capabilities, and an analytical view of the relationship of monetary dependence of the African franc in the African Sahel countries and the French-speaking African countries in general.

Al-Tamawy follows the historical roots of the emergence of the African franc and the developments that followed it through the different periods in terms of its value to the French franc, the conditions and requirements of issuance and the volume of deposits to be kept with the French Central Bank.

The researcher also presented the economic challenges resulting from that monetary dependence and the restrictions that it represented on the development policies of the countries participating in this monetary system before moving to discuss the status of the Sahel countries of the African franc, which varies between demanding some to leave it to adopt new, more independent systems and to achieve development goals and requirements. In return, others insisted on staying within the framework of the existing banking system to preserve the stability and monetary balance it achieves from their point of view in light of the difficulty of achieving monetary independence and the risk of exchange rate fluctuation in light of the narrow scope of local banking systems, even at the expense of development and independence in one way or another.

The researcher concludes in his findings

and recommendations that any of the choices that the leaders of the Sahel countries will make will have consequences and costs that African countries must be willing to bear. Dr. Bastanji's paper displayed the topic by presenting the capabilities and potential of the Sahel countries of wealth and resources in a range of different sectors, which reveals the paradox of those countries suffering from poverty despite their mineral wealth and energy sources that are not available to other regions. It is a paradox that can be explained in light of the reality of dependence detailed in Tamawy's paper. Dr. Bastanji believes that Russia can play a key role in breaking the cycles of dependence with Russia's expertise in the fields of energy, manufacturing, and agricultural technology.

If Al-Tamawy's paper has illustrated a clear picture of the features of monetary dependence on the African franc and the opportunities to support fiscal and monetary policies in the Sahel countries, the papers related to the impact of colonial policies on administrative and governmental systems in the Sahel region, which addressed the models of Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso and the countries of the Lake Chad, which were tackled by the researcher: Ismail Taher, Abu Bakr Mehman, Siaka Coulibaly and Dr. Ahmed Yacoub, were responsible for describing the environment surrounding that monetary dependence, which is in its entirety, as reflected in the various papers, the cause and consequence of monetary dependence on the part of the local banking systems of the French system.

This is evident from the assertion of the various papers and in various applications (Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso...), that the administrative systems inherited by the countries of the region from colonialism are in synergy with the education systems stemming from the legacies of the cultural assimilation policy implemented by France

on its colonies, which resulted in African elites at various levels of government owing allegiance to France, which made France, not the African peoples, the watchdog and performance officer of those systems and contributed in one way or another to the spread of corruption in its various forms (nepotism, discrimination, bribery, nepotism...).

In the administrative system, this was aided by the weakness of resources due to external attrition and internal corruption, which on the other hand led to the explosion of no less serious problems such as poverty and poor health and social care, among others, which formed a fertile environment for the emergence of the phenomenon of extremism and violence in the region, as explained in the intervention of Dr. Ahmed Yacoub Dabbio.

For the picture to be completed, two main points can be mentioned from our point of view in this regard. The first point relates to the structural problem that we see as the main cause of most of the problems and repercussions mentioned by the researchers, which is the problem of the African state itself. The second point concerns Russia's potential to play the role hoped for on the African Sahel scene and the challenges it could face.

In our view, the African countries in general, and the Sahel countries in particular, have been hit by three basic curses that have hampered their capabilities of movement and action: the curse of borders, the curse of resources, and the curse of corruption.

The African borders as a whole at independence were inconsistent with the requirements of the state, both in terms of security, as the strategic depth necessary to defend the state is not available in some African countries, such as those states on the coast

of West Africa, or distorted and inconsistent borders, as shown in the case of the state of Mali in the west and the state of Somalia in the east, both of which are almost naturally divided between the north and south, in a way that facilitates separation between the northern and southern sides and hinders central control of the country's territories, in addition to another dimension, which is the phenomenon of the landlocked state in which the Sahel countries are located (Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali.....), which casts a shadow over the capabilities of these countries to penetrate the outside world and their permanent need for a regional or international backer.

In terms of the curse of resources, it can be said that the riches of the region, especially strategic ones such as uranium, oil, gas, and gold, in addition to phosphates and iron, have made the region the focus of attention of the colonial powers throughout different eras, ranging from the exploitation of humans (slave trade) to the exploitation of land and stone resources (salt, gold, uranium....). All of this serves the interests of the colonial powers, which African countries inherited at independence and made many of them dependent on the revenues of those resources in their initial form, either while rising or deteriorating.

The poor returns of these resources result in the weak capabilities of the extractive systems and thus the decline and weakness of their distribution capabilities to the various sectors of production and to the categories of the people as well, which leads to interaction with other elements to political and economic instability in the country. On the other hand, with the discovery of oil and mineral wealth in some Sahel countries at economic rates, talk began about the curse of abundance and surpluses that accompany the high prices of raw materials in the global markets or the high stock of strategic minerals in the Sahel countries and the increase



in their production rates of those minerals and thus the returns from them, many of which go in the form of deposits with the French Central Bank, entrenching the reality of dependence between the two sides and depriving the development sectors in the Sahel countries of the potential for development and development in what resembles the symptoms of the Dutch disease.

As for the third curse, it is the curse of corruption that plagues many African regimes and countries, and the papers presented showed its spread at various levels, starting from small corruption (bribes of administrative officials, junior officers and local employees, nepotism, nepotism, lack of commitment or discipline in performing tasks and responsibilities...), to large corruption at the level of state and government leaders, which includes wasting public money, manipulating the country's economies, undue commissions, and suspicious relations internally and externally with companies and businessmen, which the leaks of Panama 2016, Paradise 2017, and Pandora 2021 revealed its percentage at the global level and in Africa.

Although it does not represent the value of the total corruption, that percentage is very high compared to the levels of income and revenues in the continent and represents a loss of development opportunities to modify the balance of power between the continent and its old masters, led by France, and the loss of these wealth and potentials represents an entry point to consolidate the reality of the subordination of the countries of the continent to the influence of Western countries at various levels.

The second and last point in this comment is related to Russia's capabilities and potential in helping the Sahel countries get rid of the subordination to Western (French) influence. This is something that was presented during the panel discus-

sion, which confirms two parallel issues, namely Russia's capabilities to help achieve development for the Sahel countries in several sectors, as mentioned above. On the other hand, it confirms that this aid should not be an entry point for replacing dependence on the West and France with dependence on Russia. The goal should be to help the Sahel countries decide their destiny and own their capabilities away from the effects of this or that force from international or regional powers. With agreement with this proposal, the question remains about Russia's potential and capabilities to help confront Western influence in general and French influence in particular, and the challenges that the Russian role may face in this regard, which the papers did not discuss in detail.

In this regard, it can be said that the role that Russia can play in resisting French influence in West Africa and the African Sahel is influenced by a combination of strategic, political, and economic factors, some of which represent incentives for countries and others represent obstacles that must be overcome. The following is a monitoring of the most important contents of both.

At the level of capabilities, we can refer to the strategic relations and security ties between Russia and the countries of the region represented by the military presence and the Wagner Group, as Russia has a large military presence in countries such as Mali and the Central African Republic through the Wagner Group, which provides Russia with influence in security matters, especially in areas where the French military presence was controversial. In addition to arms sales, Russia is one of the largest suppliers of weapons to the African continent in general, which makes it a conceivable alternative to arms imports from France and Western countries, especially since they are often not accompanied by political conditions like their Western coun-

terparts, which makes them more attractive and thus enhances Russian influence.

In addition to the above, **Russia also possesses another set of so-called soft power, foremost of which are the historical and bilateral diplomatic relations between Russia and many West African countries, especially Mali, and countries with Marxist and socialist historical experiences and backgrounds.** Russia also uses media channels and media channels to promote narratives that challenge Western influence and portray Russia as a reliable partner against neo-colonialism. This comes in addition to promoting Russian capabilities in the fields of energy and mining, which represent opportunities to strengthen Russian relations with the countries of the region, especially with the accompanying emphasis on the common consensus between the two sides in hostility to the West and Russia's keenness and awareness of non-interference in the internal affairs of African countries, which attracts leaders and peoples frustrated by French interventionist policies.

Furthermore, Russia's investment potential is enhanced by its membership and leadership in the BRICS group, which, along with Russia, includes Brazil, India, China, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, and Egypt, which individually and collectively have great potential to support Russia in its efforts to counter French influence in West Africa and the Sahel region. By leveraging the BRICS's collective diplomatic, economic, and security resources, Russia can enhance its presence and effectiveness in the region. The BRICS also represents an opportunity for coordination between Russia and its partners in the group committed to the same conservative line in dealing with the Western world, making it a valuable tool for Russia in its quest to expand its influence and challenge Western hegemony in Africa.

However, these Russian capabilities in working on the African arena in general and the African coast, in particular, are offset by a significant set of challenges and obstacles that limit that effectiveness and those capabilities. In this regard, it is possible to refer to some of these challenges, foremost of which is the weakness of Russian cultural and historical ties with the peoples of the region. Suppose there are historical moments in which the ruling elites agreed in their Marxist and socialist confrontations with the Soviet Union (Russia) and received its support. In that case, these limited time and local ties do not amount to French ties that have deep historical, linguistic, and cultural ties with their former colonies, which Russia lacks. Accordingly, this limits its ability to build long-term influence based on cultural kinship or historical relations.

On the economic level, as Omar Bastanji's study rightly pointed out, the volume of Russian trade with the countries of the region is negligible for import and export. Moreover, Russia's weak financial capabilities compared to the countries of Europe (France's strategic ally) limit Russia's ability to compete in providing assistance or competition in the fields of high-cost investment projects, especially in light of the reality of political instability and security conditions in the region, which make it a risky environment for sustainable Russian participation.

On the other hand, it is no secret that any Russian move to strengthen its position and prestige in the African Sahel region will often be matched by diplomatic pressure from France and the European Union on African countries to limit Russian influence, using the conditions of benefiting from trade agreements, aid, and sanctions. This comes in addition to the other pressures on Russia itself, taking advantage of the Wagner Group's involvement in conflict zones and the international criticism that can arise as a consequence; complicat-



ing Russia's broader diplomatic efforts.

If the BRICS group represents a potential supporter of the Russian role in the African Sahel and an employable potential on the part of Russia as a founder and a main partner in the group, as mentioned above, the differences in the approaches and goals of the member countries of the group in their relations with African countries (There is no doubt that India's goals differ from China's goals in the continent and may even contradict them, as well as Iran's efforts and goals in the continent are difficult to align with the goals of Saudi policies at the same level.....).

This makes relying on unifying the Group's opinions to support the Russian policies that aim at reducing Western or French influence on Africa, difficult to achieve and raises disagreement among the members of the Group more than unites them, thus making the ball in the Russian decision-maker's court, whose main dependence must be on his own capabilities and perceptions of opportunities and challenges on the arena and bilateral coordination with countries and powers whose goals are consistent with those perceptions and strategies. This is because some regional actors (Nigeria and Ghana) may find the Russian intervention and its escalating influence in the region a threat to their position and relative weight in the region and destabilizing it.

As a result, the internal politics of West African countries, at the heart of which are the countries in question, are sensitive and complex, where historical, cultural, socio-economic and even religious considerations overlap, as well as multi-level political and strategic dimensions, as different regimes, factions and groups adopt different views on foreign influence. Therefore, any international actor wishing to play a role in such countries must deal with these dynamics carefully, as any wrong step will cost a lot, whether by distancing potential allies or

provoking violent reactions with undesirable consequences on the part of competitors.

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October 2024.

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