

MILITARY COUPS AND FOREIGN POLICY: A DIPLOMATIC APPROACH TO FRANCOPHONE AFRICA'S POLITICAL INSTABILITY

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Abstract

In recent years, Francophone Africa has experienced a surge in political unrest characterized by a series of coups d'état, disrupting the democratic progress achieved since the 1990s. This article delves into the underlying causes, implications, and international responses to these coups, particularly focusing on notable occurrences in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. By employing a multidimensional analysis, encompassing political, economic, and social dynamics, the article aims to unravel the intricate factors that precipitated these coups. Understanding these complexities is imperative for devising effective strategies to address and mitigate the recurrence of such destabilizing events. Through a comprehensive examination of the region's socio-political landscape, this study endeavors to provide insights into the root causes of political upheaval, offering avenues for fostering stability and democratic resilience.

Keywords: Francophone Africa, coups d'état, political unrest, democratic progress, socio-political dynamics.

INTRODUCTION

Recent events in several nations in Francophone Africa have been marked by political unrest, with a series of coups d'état interrupting the democratic paths that these countries have achieved since the 1990s. These coups, which took place in countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, raise profound questions about their underlying causes, implications and international responses. This article seeks to analyze and understand the factors that contributed to these coups' d'état and the complex political, economic and social dynamics unfolding in the region.

To fully understand these events, it is crucial to examine the historical context that led to the independence of these Francophone nations and the establishment of complex relations with France. During the 1950s, the African continent witnessed rising antiimperialist movements, with many colonies fervently seeking their independence. In this scenario, France, shaken by the repercussions of the Second World War, made the decision to grant independence to its African colonies, starting in 1959. However, the granting of independence came with comprehensive cooperation agreements, which included areas such as military, educational, cultural and economic.

These cooperation agreements between France and French-speaking African nations led to a number of implications, including the commitment of these nations to cede part of their natural resources to France and to

allow the presence of French armed forces in their territories. Furthermore, the cooperation agreements also established French as the official language in many of these countries, reflecting France's continued influence and deliberate efforts at linguistic and cultural expansion in these territories.

However, recently, these countries have faced a wave of coups d'état that have interrupted the democratic paths they had followed in recent decades. The causes of these coups are multifaceted and include concerns about corruption, political instability, discontent with economic performance and persistent security challenges.

Furthermore, a notable trend has been the rise of populism and the search for greater autonomy from French influence, symbolized by the expulsion of French troops and the search for alliances with Russia.

This article will examine in detail the causes of these coups d'état, the political and economic implications that resulted from these events, and the international responses, including sanctions imposed by regional organizations and the international community.

Additionally, the complex issue of neocolonialism will be discussed, as these nations seek to redefine their relationships with France and other international actors.

In the context of the political, economic and social transformations underway in Francophone Africa, this article seeks to shed light on the geopolitical dynamics and aspirations of these nations in search of greater independence and diversification of alliances. By analyzing the causes, consequences and responses to recent coups d'état, we aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of political developments in the region and their implications for international relations.

METHODOLOGY

Our research into the independence of Francophone nations in Africa and its implications has taken a meticulous, multidisciplinary approach, incorporating diverse sources and strategies to provide a comprehensive analysis. Initially, we conducted a comprehensive review of historical literature, exploring archival documents, historical testimonies, and works by renowned historians, laying a solid foundation for understanding the historical context of African nations during the colonial period and struggles for independence. A detailed analysis of the cooperation agreements between France and its former African colonies was carried out, examining the implications of these agreements for the sovereignty and development of these nations. Additionally, we delve deeper into recent coups d'état in French-speaking African countries such as Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, analyzing news sources, political speeches, and international relations experts to understand the factors underlying these events. The geopolitical implications of these coups was also assessed, considering their impact on international relations and the dynamics between these African countries, France, the European Union, the United Nations and other global actors. From this collected data, we construct a cohesive narrative spanning from the historical events of the struggle for independence to the contemporary challenges faced by these nations, providing a complete and informed understanding of these processes over time.

THE PROCESS OF INDEPENDENCE OF FRANCOPHONE NATIONS IN AFRICA (ROLE OF FRANCE IN OBTAINING INDEPENDENCE)

To comprehensively address the origins and underlying factors contributing to the state of judicial systems in French-speaking African countries like Benin, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Chad, and others, it is imperative to delve into their historical contexts. By doing so, we can gain a deeper understanding of how these nations attained their independence.

It is extremely important to analyze the independence process to understand how these countries became francophone nations. When we mention French-speaking Africa, we are often faced with the question of how these countries adopted French as an official language.

Francophone Africa encompasses several countries, such as Benin, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Chad, among others, which were subjugated by French colonization. During the 1950s, Africa witnessed the rise of anti-imperialist movements, with many colonies fervently seeking their independence. In this context, France, shaken by the repercussions of the Second World War, with the aim of not losing its influence in Africa, took the decision to grant independence to its African colonies, starting in 1959, under the leadership of President Charles de Gaulle (Presidential term: January 8, 1959 to April 28, 1969).

However, for each colony to conquer its autonomy in a peaceful way, cooperation agreements were signed that covered several areas, such as military, educational, cultural and economic. Such agreements are recorded in the work of Maurice Ligot, entitled "*Cooperation agreements between France and French-speaking African and Malagasy countries.*"

Essentially, these nations agreed to cede a portion of their natural resources to France and to allow the presence of French armed forces in their territories, on an indefinite basis, as part of these cooperation agreements Ligot (1964).

The means provided by cooperation agreements

"In the agreements concluded with the other States, it is foreseen that they consult on a permanent basis on defense problems with France.

In addition to the previously mentioned agreements, cultural cooperation treaties were also established in which France expressed its intention to promote its language and culture in the territories in question. These agreements were drawn up with the aim of enhancing French culture and language. As a result, many African countries now have French as their official language, reflecting France's continued influence and deliberate efforts at linguistic and cultural expansion in these territories. This linguistic strategy, known as "soft power," continues to be a strategic basis implemented in these countries to this day.

Quoting *Musa Anter (1920 to 1992)*, a Kurdish writer born in Turkey, we can reflect on how language plays a fundamental role in the cultural identity and stability of a State. The quote suggests that the imposition of a foreign

language can be seen as a form of domination, indicating that the state was built on the land and culture of those whose language is being destabilized. This perspective highlights the importance of cultural and linguistic issues in geopolitical dynamics and international relations.

Cooperation agreements between France and the French-speaking African and French-speaking Malagasy countries (Ligot, 1964:42).

Cultural cooperation agreements

These agreements are of extreme importance: They condition the maintenance and expansion of the French language and culture in Black Africa, as well as the development...

These agreements were signed in a context where these nations felt compelled to do so, as they were in a position of significant disadvantage. An analogy can be made with the situation in France where an armed individual confronts an unarmed civilian with the intention of stealing. In this scenario, the civilian, without means of defense, faces the difficult choice between surrendering his belongings to avoid risks to his life or risking everything.

Likewise, these African nations, without resources to defend themselves, found themselves pressured to accept the terms of these cooperation agreements with France, which implied the transfer of resources and the French military presence in their territories, in order to avoid conflicts or other unfavorable consequences.

CAUSES OF COUPS D'ÉTATS

Corruption, political instability, and coups in African nations: A nuanced examination

In recent years, the African continent has witnessed a series of coups d'état, with emphasis on the occurrence of these events in countries that maintain cooperation agreements with France. This succession of coups has raised questions about its underlying causes and motivations. In the last four years, nations such as Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger have been the scene of coups that have interrupted the democratic paths conquered since the 1990s. These events have raised concerns both among countries in the region and among foreign powers that have strategic interests in Africa.

The quote attributed to Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) and Hope (2000) "*Corruption is not when the government steals from you. Corruption is when they stop stealing from you because you paid a bribe,*" succinctly captures the essence of systemic corruption prevalent in many countries, particularly those where the integrity of government and public institutions is compromised. In this article, we will delve into and provide a nuanced argument on this statement. Corruption is a pervasive societal ill with multifaceted detrimental impacts. It manifests diversely, encompassing embezzlement of public resources and the offering of illicit payments, such as bribes and kickbacks, to secure basic services or unfair advantages. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's quote serves to underscore the subtlety and perniciousness of the latter form of corruption, where transgressions are less overt yet equally corrosive.

In numerous nations, regrettably, it is a prevalent phenomenon for citizens to find themselves compelled to offer bribes to public officials to access services and entitlements that are rightfully theirs under the law. This predicament extends across sectors such as healthcare, education, the judicial system, and even mundane undertakings like procuring a driver's license or business permit. This corrupt modus operandi not only erodes trust in government institutions but also engenders a society wherein the attainment of justice and public services becomes contorted by the omnipotence of financial incentives. In some countries, it is common for patients to have to pay bribes to doctors, nurses, and hospital staff to receive proper and timely medical treatment. For instance, a patient in need of surgery may be forced to pay a bribe to ensure that their procedure is performed without delays.

This undermines trust in healthcare institutions, jeopardizes lives, and perpetuates inequality in access to healthcare services.

Therefore, Hope (2000) quotation incites contemplation about the intricate nature of corruption, extending beyond the mere misappropriation of public funds. It accentuates the significance of acknowledging and combating systemic corruption, wherein under-the-table dealings are covertly institutionalized, subverting the ethos of fairness, transparency, and equitable governance that should underpin society's foundations. Addressing this form of corruption necessitates not only the enactment of more stringent legal frameworks but also the cultivation of a cultural shift that champions transparency, accountability, and justice at all echelons of society. From this vantage point, it is readily apparent that corruption remains a deeply entrenched issue within the governments of African nations, with Niger and Mali being notable examples. This pervasive corruption may very well serve as a pivotal factor contributing to the recurrent coups witnessed in these regions.

Also, we discovered other more important factors that perhaps provoked this coup d'état in Niger recently. Firstly, discontent with Bazoum's government was driven by a number of critical issues. The Nigerien population has expressed growing concern about the country's economic performance, as many have faced economic hardship. Furthermore, the management of the COVID19 pandemic generated controversies, with questions about the measures adopted and the distribution of resources to combat the health crisis. There has also been criticism regarding internal security, as Niger has faced significant security challenges due to the presence of terrorist and insurgent groups in various parts of the country.

Mali has experienced political instability in previous years, including a military coup in 2020 that ousted then president Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta. This history of political instability created an environment ripe for future coups, as trust in democratic institutions had been eroded.

Mamdani (2018) and Barclay (2012) in their articles, explores how contemporary coups d'état can be understood as a reflection of the colonial legacies that persist in the governance of Mali and other African nations.

Furthermore, following the 2020 coup, a transitional government was established to lead the country until elections. However, this transitional government has faced significant criticism, including a lack of progress on political reforms and resolving the problems that led to the previous coup. Dissatisfaction with the transitional government and perceived ineffectiveness contributed to political unrest in the country.

Another important factor was the continued security threat in Mali, including the presence of terrorist groups such as jihadists. These persistent security challenges have created an environment of insecurity and fear among the population, fueling dissatisfaction and the search for alternative solutions to deal with this threat.

Political and geopolitical dynamics in West Africa: Reflections on recent coups and searches for autonomy

The independence granted to these countries was conditioned by certain terms. In defense cooperation agreements, France established that the continued presence of its military troops was necessary to protect its own interests. Since the 1960s, France has carried out more than 40 military interventions. Douglas Yates explain in his work about the interventions, consequences, objectives of these French military interventions in its former African colonies. According to the terms of these agreements, the French armed forces have the right to free transit through these territories, and in the event of intervention, these countries are obligated to provide their resources to support French military operations in defense of shared interests (Ligot, 1964).

“The French army is thus recognized as having the right to circulate freely in the territory of the signatory States, as well as in their airspace and their territorial waters, to use all their port, railway, road and air infrastructure and the post and telecommunications networks...”

In the signed agreements, France clearly establishes provisions that, when these countries have products or resources available for trade, they are expected to first consider offering these opportunities to France, granting it priority over potential competitors. Additionally, when these African nations require goods and services, they are inclined to favor options of French origin before exploring alternatives in other markets. Furthermore, these nations are also tasked with providing infrastructure for the storage of products, materials, and resources that may be utilized by the French armed forces. This includes the provision of storage facilities, warehouses, and other essential structures to support France's military activities in these regions (Ebaye, 2010; Englebert, 2009).

Upon analysis, it becomes apparent that these countries encounter significant limitations in terms of controlling their territories, resources, and the ability to make independent decisions to a considerable extent.

This situation raises questions about the extent of their sovereignty. In the realm of international relations, sovereignty holds a pivotal role, allowing nations like Brazil to autonomously determine what serves the best interests of their territories and populations and, when deemed necessary, to sever ties with other states. Sovereignty is a principle revered by several political philosophers, including Rousseau (1987), for its critical role in ensuring that a state can fully assert control over its national interests.

In summary, sovereignty stands as a fundamental principle that empowers nations to shape their own destinies. It encompasses self-determination, independence, internal governance, the safeguarding of national interests, the promotion of peace, participation in international relations, and respect for cultural diversity. Sovereignty is a foundational element in international relations, assuring that states can steer their own course without unwarranted interference from external parties.

Nevertheless, in the midst of the 21st century, in a world that has witnessed the expansion of democracy and where the majority of states exercise their political autonomy to shape their futures, there are still nations grappling with forms of neocolonialism. Many of the former French colonies in Africa, as noted by various scholars, maintain deep ties with the French imperialist system, raising questions about their genuine independence and sovereignty.

However, on January 18, 2021, the transitional government announced the dissolution of the CNSP, albeit almost four months after the initial agreement that pledged its dissolution. Subsequently, the constitution underwent no alterations, with the new Magna Carta, enacted on July 22, altering the status of French from an official language (which had been in place since Mali's independence in 1960) to a working language.

In this context, it is worth noting that one of the initial actions following the coup was the termination of the cultural cooperation agreement with France, which included the status of the French language in Mali. Additionally, the military junta severed defense cooperation agreements with France, citing "flagrant violations of Malian sovereignty." This decision garnered support from proponents of closer ties with Russia (Cooper, 1996). In summary, the coup d'état in Mali reflects a discernible aspiration on the part of the country to reclaim its sovereignty following a sense of discontent arising from perceived violations of agreements with France and a perception of exploitation by this former colonial power. This event serves as an illustration of the intricate political dynamics and international relations within the African region (EURO NEWS, 2022).

A recurring trend in these events is the emergence of populism, where emerging leaders adopt a nationalist stance and position themselves as champions of national interests, garnering the support of their fellow citizens. This includes adopting an anti-French stance, symbolized by the expulsion of French military troops and calls for the French ambassador to return to their home country. Furthermore, these countries have received support from Russia, which is noteworthy as it signifies a growing inclination towards forging alliances with Russia over France. This suggests a deepening sense of discontent with France, which could be characterized as a rising sentiment of frustration towards this former colonial power (Siegle, 2021).

In the first image, a photograph can be seen depicting President Putin being displayed in the hands of Nigerien citizens, indicating the people's support for cooperation with Russia (Figure 1). While the second image come across a message of great impact written as " *France gets out* ", denoting a demonstration in favor of the withdrawal of French military forces from the country (Figure 2).

It was also noted that the population has shown support for the military in this endeavor in search of the withdrawal of French troops from the country. This popular support is evidence of widespread discontent in relation to the foreign military presence and reflects the collective will to seek the country's sovereignty and autonomy.

As for the coup in Niger, which took place on July 26, 2023, it involved the detention of President Mohamed Bazoum by the presidential guard and the proclamation of General Abdourahamane Tchiani as leader of a military junta. The country's borders were closed, state institutions were suspended, and a curfew was implemented.

Niger is notable for being the seventh largest supplier of uranium in the world and one of the main suppliers of this resource to French nuclear power plants. Although it plays a critical role in uranium supply to France, access to electricity in Niger is limited, with only 18.6% of the population having access, compared to France where virtually the entire population has electricity (Tables 1 and 2).

These events in West Africa reflect not only discontent regarding French influence, but also a search for greater autonomy and diversification of geopolitical alliances. The region is undergoing significant changes in its political and geopolitical dynamics, which could have long-term implications for international relations in West Africa.

When analyzing the energy balance data, it is possible that a notable concern arises regarding the exploration of uranium by these African countries, supplying it mainly to France. Niger is one of the main suppliers of uranium to France. This analysis could indicate a significant disparity in how this exploration is conducted and how benefits are distributed. This suggests the possibility of underlying inequalities in the relationship between France and these developing nations.



Figure 1. Picture showing people support for president Putin in Russia. Source: Le Monde, Credit: AP.



Figure 2. This picture denotes a demonstration in favor of the withdrawal of French military forces from the country.

Source: RFI, Credit: AFP.

This concern about the exploitation of natural resources, such as uranium, raises important questions about equity and justice in the distribution of economic benefits generated by these resources. In such situations, it is often essential to consider how revenues generated from exploration are shared, whether they contribute to local development and whether communities living close to extraction sites are being adequately compensated and protected in terms of health and the environment.

Therefore, these data may indicate not only differences in electricity capacity, but also inequalities in economic and trade relations between France and these natural resource supplying countries.

The recent events in Mali, as well as in the other mentioned states, appear to indicate a shared objective: a desire for a reduced French presence in their territories and a reevaluation of cooperation agreements with France. These actions might also suggest a willingness to explore new business partners, with Russia seemingly emerging as a potential alternative (Allan and OjedaGarcía, 2022).

Table 1. Energy balance of Niger.

<u>Electricity</u>	<u>Total/year (bilh. KWh)</u>	<u>Niger by habitant (kWh)</u>	<u>USA by habitant (kWh)</u>
Consumption	1.33	50.57	11.695.27
Production	581.42	22.18	12.147.64
Importation	1.06	40.33	12.147.64

18.6% of the country's population (as of 2021) has access to electricity. In rural areas, the participation was 9.1%. Source: Dadosmundiais.com.

Table 2. Energy balance of France.

<u>Electricity</u>	<u>Total/year (bilh. KWh)</u>	<u>France by habitant (kWh)</u>	<u>Europe by habitante</u>
<u>(kWh)</u>			
Consumption	472.70	6.958.04	5.462.78
Productions	553.71	8.150.56	5.869.23
Importation	19.61	288.70	773.65
Exportation	64.43	948.32	770.49

100.0% of the country's population (as of 2021) has access to Electricity.

The military coups that have occurred in these countries may partly arise from the perception that the democratic processes as practiced may not have fully reflected the will and autonomy of local populations. It appears there is a belief that historical ties with France may have influenced the selection of presidents in the region. Consequently, the new military leaders often appear to adopt a nationalist stance and express a readiness to safeguard their nations' interests, potentially challenging foreign influence, particularly that of France. This could include considerations of the withdrawal of French military troops from their territories and a reimagining of international relations with a focus on diversifying alliances.

According to the specialist in international politics, Simon Pascal Alain Handy (France 24, 2023), in an interview with France 24, he suggests that recent coups d'état might reflect a pivotal moment in African history. It seems there is a desire among a generation to break free from what could be perceived as a historical legacy of colonial influence, although they may not have received concrete political responses to their aspirations. This situation highlights a complex scenario, where external influences seem to persist in attempting to maintain control over the African continent. Handy's insights call for contemplation on the urgency of addressing these challenges and enabling Africa to potentially forge its own path towards development and self-determination.

One notable figure who shares similar sentiments is Fanon et al. (1963) and Mbembe (2001), a renowned African philosopher, political scientist, and historian. Mbembe's works often explore postcolonial African politics and the complex dynamics of power on the continent. He argues that Africa must confront its historical legacies and challenge neocolonial forces that continue to influence its political and economic landscape. Like Handy (2023) and Mbembe (2001) highlight the need for Africans to shape their destiny and assert their sovereignty.

Additionally, African leaders and intellectuals, such as Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, former Nigerian Finance Minister and Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), advocate for a more equitable global order that empowers African nations economically and politically.

They stress the importance of Africa's voice in international affairs and its ability to make decisions that align with its interests.

In essence, there is a growing chorus of voices within Africa and among international scholars who share the belief that Africa should assert its independence, challenge historical legacies, and pursue its own path toward development and self-determination. These perspectives collectively call for addressing the complex challenges facing the continent and nurturing its potential for autonomy and growth. The argument that African leaders collaborate with the West, contributing to the maintenance of Western influence, is in line with the perspective presented by Chinweizu (1975) in his work *"The West and the Rest of Us: White Predators, Black Slavers, and the African Elite"*, published in 1975. The author highlights the responsibility of the African elite in maintaining neocolonialism, arguing that some of them collaborated with Western powers to the detriment of their own compatriots. Chinweizu criticizes these elite for its complicity in the continued exploitation of Africa, highlighting how these collaborations have often served Western interests to the detriment of African sustainable development and sovereignty.

A concrete example of this collaboration can be seen in unequal trade agreements, in which African leaders have consented to unfavorable terms for their nations, harming their economies and populations in favor of personal benefits or political advantages.

Another example is the exploitation of natural resources, where local leaders often allow foreign companies to extract valuable resources without adequate environmental safeguards or a fair distribution of profits, benefiting only Western companies at the expense of the well-being of local communities.

These collaborative practices have contributed to the persistence of Western influence in many African nations, with local leaders often prioritizing their personal interests or maintaining the status quo over the interests of their citizens and the sustainable development of Africa as a Whole.

Furthermore, it is important to note that in recent years there has been an increase in public debate about the role of France and other Western powers in the exploration of Africa. This discussion raises questions about

neocolonialism, in which African nations, despite their formal independence, remain subjugated to Western powers in various forms, including economic exploitation, political influence, and cultural imposition.

However, it is essential to address these issues with care and precision, avoiding making generalized or simplistic statements. The debate on neocolonialism in Africa is complex and requires an in-depth analysis of the political, economic and cultural dynamics at play. Therefore, it is worth resorting to works such as that of Chinweizu Ibekwe to support a more informed understanding of these issues and promote constructive discussions on the topic.

CONSEQUENCES OF COUPS D'ÉTAT

Political crises and sanctions in West Africa: Coups d'Etat and international implications

ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), also known as ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), is a regional integration organization made up of fifteen countries in West Africa. Its main objectives include promoting economic integration, facilitating regional trade and strengthening political cooperation in the region. The importance of ECOWAS in maintaining political stability in West Africa is discussed in Nana Konadu Agyeman, "Maintaining political stability in West Africa: Has ECOWAS Parliament lived up to its mandate?". The article explores the crucial role played by ECOWAS in promoting political stability in the West African region.

The organization has played a fundamental role in preventing conflicts, resolving political crises and promoting democracy in the region. Furthermore, ECOWAS has strived to facilitate dialogue between member countries, thereby strengthening regional cooperation.

Through its initiative to maintain political stability, ECOWAS has played a prominent role in resolving conflicts and promoting measures aimed at maintaining peace and harmony in West Africa. ECOWAS efforts include mediating political conflicts, supervising elections and strengthening democratic institutions in member countries. On July 30, 2023, an Extraordinary Session of the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) took place in the city of Abuja, Nigeria. This special session was chaired by His Excellency Bola Ahmed Tinubu, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and also President of the ECOWAS Assembly. The overriding reason for convening this extraordinary meeting was the need to address and respond to the recent political events that took place in the Republic of Niger, dated from 26 July 2023.

This important summit had the distinguished presence of several Heads of State, together with duly authorized representatives of ECOWAS member nations, in addition to the participation of representatives of regional and international organizations. During the proceedings of the meeting, the events that took place in the Republic of Niger were deeply discussed, notably an attempted coup and the illegal arrest of President Muhammed Bazoum, as well as members of his government.

In this context, ECOWAS, in unison with several other international organizations and nations, issued a strong condemnation of the coup attempt and the arrest of President Bazoum. The leaders present at the summit reiterated the indisputable legitimacy of President Bazoum and made a categorical appeal for his immediate release and, likewise, for the full restoration of constitutional order in the Republic of Niger.

Additionally, ECOWAS has taken the decision to apply a series of sanction measures against Niger, which include closing borders, suspending commercial and financial transactions, freezing assets and imposing travel restrictions on those involved in the coup attempt.

The said summit was also opportune to express its sincere appreciation to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for his outstanding performance in leading ECOWAS since assuming the presidency of the Conference. It was also noted that these countries Mali, Niger and Burkina-Faso have been suspended from the ECOWAS bloc with immediate effect.

The states of Mali, Niger are currently under suspension by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This measure was adopted due to the application of the same sanctions that were previously imposed on Niger, as mentioned previously. Furthermore, these nations were also the target of financial sanctions by the European Union.

The United Nations (UN) responded to this situation by issuing calls for the restoration of peace and security in the region. The UN is committed to vigorous efforts to ensure that order is promptly restored. France also took the decision to apply sanctions of a financial nature in relation to these countries.

Recently, it was possible to follow the speech given by the current President of France, Emmanuel Macron, in response to these coups d'état. In it, President Macron emphasized the importance of restoring legitimate leaders, that is, those who were democratically elected to assume power. However, it is regrettable that these calls were met with resistance, as the coup plotters demanded the immediate withdrawal of French troops from the affected countries. President Macron, in turn, maintained a firm position in refusing the withdrawal of French military forces. He argued that such a decision should be the responsibility of the legitimate president of Mali and Niger, highlighting that he does not recognize the current transitional government. This impasse highlights the complexity of the situation and the difficult negotiations that are taking place behind the scenes in international relations.

In response to the coup d'état, these countries presented an ultimatum, in which they requested the withdrawal of French military troops, which constitutes a violation of the defense cooperation agreements established with France.

However, President Macron of France has expressed his reluctance to agree to the withdrawal of French troops from these territories. Cortright and Lopez (2002), provides a comprehensive explanation of how countries impose sanctions on other nations for specific objectives. This book sheds light on the stances of neighboring

countries when they opt to enforce sanctions against countries experiencing coups d'état, particularly within the context of ECOWAS meetings.

It's essential to note that the fundamental objectives of various sanctions, whether imposed by the United Nations, the European Union, or ECOWAS, remain consistent. These sanctions are designed to serve a common purpose. They aim to influence or pressure a particular country to alter its policies, behaviors, or to adhere to specific international standards. Crucially, these sanctions are applied without causing excessive harm to civilians or adversely affecting the general population.

Furthermore, these countries terminated their diplomatic agreements, demanding the withdrawal of the French ambassador from their territories. France has reiterated on several occasions that military agreements have been concluded with the legally constituted authorities of Niger and that the responsibility for the termination of these agreements lies with the Nigerien authorities themselves.

It is crucial to note that these countries are landlocked nations, which can pose considerable challenges in the areas of import and export, as most of their neighboring countries have closed their borders. In this context, Russia's support plays a fundamental role in the survival of these states.

Economic and social consequences of coups d'état

The closure of neighboring countries' borders as a result of coups d'état can have devastating effects on regional trade and the economy. A concrete example is the impact on local traders. Consider a merchant who supplies products such as cloth and other goods. When borders are closed, this trader can no longer carry out his business transactions easily. This can result in significant economic problems, including decreased revenues, increased alternative transportation costs, and the possible loss of jobs. Additionally, many of the countries affected by coups d'état are landlocked countries, complicating the situation even more. The lack of direct access to seaports makes both the export and import of goods difficult. This can lead to delays in deliveries, increases in transportation costs and a decrease in the competitiveness of companies from these countries in the international market. To deepen this analysis, we can consider the work "*Globalization and Its Discontents*" by Lecture (2002). Although the book focuses primarily on the consequences of globalization, it also addresses the complex interactions between politics, economics, and international trade, offering valuable insights into how political events such as coups d'état can affect the global and regional economy.

In addition to the economic impacts, coups d'état also have significant repercussions on the social fabric of the affected countries. The political instability and uncertainty that accompany these events can generate a series of social challenges. One of the main social impacts is related to the security and stability of local communities. Coup's d'état often triggers internal conflicts, ethnic divisions and political tensions, resulting in increased violence and instability. This not only puts the lives and well-being of citizens at risk, but also undermines social cohesion. Furthermore, political turmoil often leads to the displacement of people. Citizens in affected areas may

be forced to flee their homes due to conflict or political persecution. This creates a humanitarian crisis, with displaced people facing challenges such as lack of shelter, limited access to health and education services, and difficulties meeting basic needs. Another important social impact is related to access to education. Political instability often disrupts the regular functioning of schools and universities. This means that young people face disruptions to their education, which can have long-term effects on their personal development and employment prospects. To support this analysis of social impacts, you might consider Skocpol (1979), and Fang (2020). The book explores how political events, such as revolutions and conflicts, affect a country's social and political structures. Skocpol offers insights into how political changes can trigger profound social transformations, and by citing this work you will further strengthen your analysis of the social impacts of coups d'état.

Discussing issues related to education, let's consider an international case as an example. The cancellation of student registrations could have severe consequences for individuals who were pursuing education opportunities in France. They are now confronted with uncertainty regarding their academic standing and future prospects. Furthermore, the suspension of all official relations signifies a rupture in diplomatic communications and collaboration between France and these affected countries. We can verify this situation through the email Koffi received on August 30, just two days before his departure to France (the students mentioned testify using assumed first names). Koffi, a doctoral student in geography from Burkina Faso, received the following message from a representative at the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs: *"I regret to inform you that we are revoking our support for your stay in France, including the cancellation of all Campus France services (plane ticket, allowances, and health insurance) (Le Monde, 2023).*

CONCLUSION

The research in question led to an in-depth examination of the Francophone nations of West Africa, their independence processes and the challenges they currently face. Firstly, the complexity of the paths to independence for these nations was highlighted, which involved cooperation agreements with France, granting autonomy under certain conditions. These agreements included commitments in the military, economic, educational and cultural areas, all of which continue to affect these countries' relations with France.

One notable aspect that emerged from this research was France's "soft power" strategy, which promoted French language and culture throughout the region. This led many countries to adopt French as their official language, consolidating French cultural influence in the region. However, at the same time, these countries faced internal challenges, including corruption, political instability, and discontent with the government.

A series of recent coups d'état, particularly in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, have raised concerns about the underlying causes. Systemic corruption was identified as a significant concern, where citizens often felt compelled to bribe public officials to access basic services and rights. This form of corruption undermines trust

in government institutions and creates a society where justice and public services are distorted by financial incentives.

Furthermore, the persistent presence of terrorist and insurgent groups in various parts of the region has also contributed to instability. These security challenges have created an environment of insecurity and fear among the population, fueling discontent and the Search for alternative solutes.

Recent events, including coups d'état, have reflected a search for greater autonomy and a diversification of geopolitical alliances. Russia's growing support for these countries suggests a trend toward a shift in traditional alliances, calling into question French influence in the region.

However, it is important to note that these developments also had consequences. Sanctions from ECOWAS, the European Union and France were imposed in response to these coups' d'état, affecting these nations economically. Furthermore, the revocation of African students' enrollment in French institutions and the suspension of official relations show a hardening of the French stance towards events in the region.

Ultimately, this research reminds us that the Francophone nations of West Africa face a complex intersection of political, economic, and cultural issues. The quest for true independence and sovereignty continues as these countries seek to balance their international relations and address domestic challenges. The evolution of these geopolitical dynamics has significant implications for the region and international relations in general. It is an ever-changing field that deserves close monitoring and ongoing critical analysis.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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