

# The Strength of Post-Neo-colonial Diplomatic Stances of Three Top Military Leaders in the Sahel of West Africa in Favour of Oriented Developmental Projects Reflecting National Realities (FODPRNR) with Minimal natural resources Previously Looted by Western European Multinational Investors: The End of Exaggerated Exploitation (EEE) in Burkina-Faso, Niger and Mali Ahead of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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Article History	Abstract
<b>Original Research Article</b>	<p><i>The present article deals with the important National Development Strategies in favour of economic growth and development of the three Sahel countries of West Africa which have proven uprightly to handle the challenges of neo-colonialism uprightly strengthen by diverse actors of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The three countries with leaders as Strongmen of the region from Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger decided to take the neo-colonial agents and institutions in an embarrassing realistic ways to end years of suffering by their populations by ousting out the then complicity leaders to the expiring of their masters thereby marking the u unhidden beginning of conflicting bilateral relations from their looters of natural resources through various mechanisms of exploitations. Their recent reflections to exploit their natural resources for the beneficiary of their citizens facing sporadic poverty since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century seems to be putting more blisters and terrible wounds to the existing neo-colonial Multinational Corporations in their agenda of continuous exploration and exploitation of lucrative natural resources of those countries where they saw themselves exposed to have been using it to the detriment of the local populations due to high rate of underdevelopment with countries tortured as Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiatives due to accumulated unplayable debts owing to the aid donors countries who are at the same time principal neo-colonial actors in the countries. While facing counter reactions from their main looters of natural wealth, In fact, local initiatives from the three Sahel States are proving more beneficial to the realities of the local population as compared to the previous years under the elected democratic regimes as opposed the choices of the present military leaders who are having their population at heart thereby weakening the previous slogan of Western hegemonic ambitions in such unchallenging exclusive sphere of influences of the Post-Colonial era of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The scrutinized of diverse sources of documentations enable us to use a historical approach which open more avenue to the future researchers of Africa in International Relations and related field of studies during the 21<sup>st</sup> Century considering the challenging strategies of globalization.</i></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Burkina-Faso, Mali, Niger, Sahel, Development Initiatives, Military Leaders, Realities and Natural resources.</p>
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## Introduction

In the early decades of the twenty-first century, the intensification of globalisation has coincided with a renewed emphasis on endogenous development strategies among Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC), accompanied by a discernible ideological shift from classical anti-colonial resistance toward opposition to neo-colonial domination. This change has been especially clear in a few West African countries, where parts of the military leadership have spoken out against the continuing influence of outside powers, especially France's presence in the region since the 1960s. These feelings have grown into a bigger political movement across the Sahel that wants countries to have full authority over their resources and decision-making, without interference from other powers that are involved in extractive practices. The situation in Niger is a clear example of this: before and after the July 2023 coup, there was a lot of public outrage against corrupt and dependent economic systems, especially in the uranium mining sector, which has some of the highest-grade reserves in the world. Past policy choices, including President Mahamadou Issoufou's lowering of mining taxes in 2014, unfairly benefited foreign businesses, mostly French ones. At the same time, claims of mutual advantages showed how weak the government's systems were. Concurrently, the presence of French military forces, ostensibly for security purposes, was widely perceived as safeguarding commercial extraction and regulating migratory flows toward Europe. Institutional arrangements such as Société des Mines de l'Air (Somaïr), nominally a joint venture yet overwhelmingly controlled by French state-linked entities, further exemplify asymmetrical economic relations, wherein Niger retains only a minor ownership stake despite the strategic significance of its uranium exports—resources that have historically powered a substantial proportion of France's electricity generation. This difference is made worse by socioeconomic factors in Niger, such as widespread poverty and inadequate access to power. The widespread anger that followed the coup, which included protests against French diplomatic and military buildings in Niamey, shows a general rejection of what people see as neo-colonial ties. This path is similar to what has happened in the past, like when Ahmed Sékou Touré defied Charles de Gaulle during Guinea's independence in 1958. The declaration of political independence led to secret destabilisation efforts like Operation Persil, which showed how France opposed African sovereignty. Even with these kinds of actions, political awareness in the region has stayed strong and grown, as shown by popular slogans that have lasted from Senegal to Niger and that call for an end to foreign influence. This shows that the fight for true self-determination in the Sahel is still going on.

People have often said that France's involvement in Africa after colonialism, especially from the second half of the twentieth century onwards, has hurt real political independence. In the decades that followed, France's former colonies saw the rise of more forceful and sophisticated ways of influencing them. However, these patterns of external dominance have faced growing opposition, particularly in West Africa, where recent political events show that people still don't want to be controlled by outsiders, much like they did in the past. This perspective places the recent series of coups in the Sahel within a larger revival of political awareness centred on sovereignty. A significant instance is Niger's resolution on 16 March 2024 to dissolve its enduring military accord with the United States, a choice made promptly after diplomatic strains emerged due to U.S. disapproval of Niger's interactions with alternative foreign allies, such as Russia and Iran. The Nigerien government publicly condemned what they saw as a condescending and threatening attitude from the U.S. delegation, stressing their right as a sovereign nation to choose their own strategic partners, especially in light of Washington's decision to stop providing assistance on its own. Concerns about the financial strain on national resources, a lack of transparency about foreign military actions, unauthorised aerial activity, and the belief that externally led security programs were not working also supported the revocation. In the bigger picture of U.S. military expansion on the continent, this decision makes sense. For example, the Pan-Sahel Initiative (2002) and the creation of the United States Africa Command in 2007 made it easier for military bases to spread across the Sahel. Strategic evaluations at that time recognised that these deployments, while framed as counterterrorism initiatives, were also designed to protect geopolitical and economic objectives, particularly access to natural resources. The destabilising effects of outside action are even obvious in the wake of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization-led military operation in Libya, which helped spread armed groups, illegal enterprises, and cross-border insurgencies across the Sahel. These events were later used to justify more military participation by both France and the US. This included the founding of the G5 Sahel framework in 2014 and the building of important operational bases in regional capitals like Niamey and N'Djamena. The increased use of drones and monitoring, especially from Air Base 201 in Agadez, shows how much outside security is involved. Even with these efforts, real-world data, like the Global Terrorism Index, shows that security in the region has gotten much worse over the last ten years. By 2023, Sahelian countries will have a much higher proportion of terrorism-related deaths and occurrences than the rest of the world. It is important to note that this pattern started before

the previous coups and instead lines up with the rise in foreign military participation after 2011. So, instead of making the region more stable, the U.S. and French-led counterterrorism model seems to have made existing problems worse, making people in the area think that outside help has been both strategically useless and politically intrusive.

The phrase "La France dégage!" ("France, get out!") has a long history of being used to oppose the lasting effects of French colonial rule. It has recently become very popular in West Africa, where people are more strongly and more coordinated in their demands for political and economic independence. This renewed momentum can be seen in events like the grassroots mobilisations in Senegal in 2018 and Bassirou Diomaye Faye's reformist agenda, especially his promise to leave the CFA franc system. It can also be seen in the widely supported military transitions in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, which led to the withdrawal of French troops between 2021 and 2023. At the same time, the governments of these central Sahelian states have started to take steps to strengthen their own control. These steps include reviewing the rules for the extractive industry and ending the deployment of foreign troops, as well as working to make alternative forms of regional cooperation more formal. The signing of the Liptako-Gourma Charter on September 16, 2023, was a major step forward in this process. It established the Alliance of Sahel States as a way for the countries to defend each other. This was partly in response to the threat of intervention and sanctions from the Economic Community of West African States after Niger's political transition in 2023. The fact that these countries are no longer part of ECOWAS is another evidence that the region is changing its strategic posture. Some people see these changes as steps to restore autonomy and fix structural imbalances, while others say that the combination of institutional breakdown and the removal of French troops could have negative effects on regional security governance, economic coordination, and long-term political stability. (**France starts 2025 with fresh controversy, questions over ...**[https://www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2023/09/16/france-suspends-student-mobility-with-niger-mali-and-burkina-faso\\_6136566\\_7.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2023/09/16/france-suspends-student-mobility-with-niger-mali-and-burkina-faso_6136566_7.html) ). In early January 2025, Côte d'Ivoire officially declared that French troops would be leaving and that the Port-Bouët facility would be put under national authority. This was a big turning point in the way France had strategically positioned itself across francophone Africa for a long time. This is part of a larger and faster trend in which French troops have been pulled out of or kicked out of former colonies. This shows that France's diplomatic and military power in the region is getting weaker. Since 2022, a number of countries, including Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and

Côte d'Ivoire, have tried to end defence agreements with France. This is a sign that the region is moving away from long-standing post-colonial security arrangements and toward a more assertive and independent stance. (**France starts 2025 with fresh controversy, questions over ...**[https://www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2023/09/16/france-suspends-student-mobility-with-niger-mali-and-burkina-faso\\_6136566\\_7.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2023/09/16/france-suspends-student-mobility-with-niger-mali-and-burkina-faso_6136566_7.html) ). These changes could be a chance for West African states to strengthen their real sovereignty and change their relationships with other countries in a more fair way. However, the presence of armed non-state actors and the strategic goals of other outside powers make the situation much more unstable, authoritarian, or fragmented. In the years after independence in the 1960s, France set up a wide range of political, economic, and military ties with its former colonies. These ties helped France keep its power and improve its reputation in the world. These agreements went beyond just diplomatic alignment. They also included financial systems, preferential support for aligned leaders, and an unprecedented permanent military presence in Cameroon, Gabon, Senegal, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Djibouti, Chad, Niger, Mali, and Côte d'Ivoire. People have long criticised France's large military presence, especially because of its questionable actions, like operations in Cameroon in the 1960s and its ties to the Rwandan government during the Rwandan Genocide. In the last few decades, there has been growing criticism of France's supposed backing for authoritarian regimes and the lack of success of its counterterrorism efforts, especially during operations Serval and Barkhane in the Sahel from 2012 to 2022. These kinds of criticisms have gotten stronger because people think they are neo-colonial, especially after Emmanuel Macron made comments that many people thought were disdainful of France's historical role in Africa. In this context, the last three years have seen a clear decline in French power, along with a rise in anti-French feelings across the Sahel and beyond. The disengagement of French troops from Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso has sped up because of military-led transitions. On the other hand, more methodical withdrawals, such the handover of Port-Bouët in Côte d'Ivoire, point to a larger strategic retreat. These changes are not only seen as tactical changes, but also as part of a deeper recognition of the flaws in past policies and a growing desire among African leaders to be independent. This trend is also symbolically shown by the renaming of public spaces in countries like Burkina Faso, Chad, and Senegal. This changing situation could lead to a more balanced restructuring of military and diplomatic cooperation and a closer alignment of governance with the hopes of the people. For example, in Mali, there are efforts to reassert control over natural resources. However, the

ongoing deterioration of security in the Sahel shows how fragile this transition is and how difficult it is to achieve post-colonial sovereignty. (France starts 2025 with fresh controversy, questions over ...[https://www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2023/09/16/france-suspends-student-mobility-with-niger-mali-and-burkina-faso\\_6136566\\_7.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2023/09/16/france-suspends-student-mobility-with-niger-mali-and-burkina-faso_6136566_7.html) ).

However, the involvement of alternative security partners in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, and Niger—particularly successor formations of the Wagner Group, which is widely believed to operate in line with Russia's strategic interests—has not clearly improved civilian protection or lowered insurgent activity. In fact, these groups have sometimes been linked to human rights abuses. At the same time, the ruling military leaders have put off promised democratic changes and, at times, used conflicts based on identity to strengthen their anti-Western credibility. Russia's increasing involvement in diplomacy and security, as shown by high-level meetings between Sergey Lavrov and regional leaders, is happening at the same time as China's growing interest and the involvement of new players like Turkey and Ukraine. This is making geopolitical competition in the Sahel even stronger. In this changing world, some governments, especially Chad, have sought out a wider range of security partnerships. This strategy may give them more power in negotiations, but it also makes it more likely that authority structures will be broken up and internal conflict will arise when different outside interests meet. The continuing civil war in Sudan,

which is made worse by Egypt and the United Arab Emirates getting involved, shows how destabilising these kinds of situations can be. More generally, the geopolitical situation in West Africa is changing quickly. France is changing how it interacts with other countries because its influence in the region is waning. At the same time, the possibility of a more inward-looking United States under Donald Trump could create strategic gaps that could lead to more competition between mid-level and major powers trying to get to the continent's resources and strategic location. This multipolar framework gives African states a chance to change long-standing imbalances, but it also makes instability more likely. In this regard, stronger regional coordination is still an important way to reduce risk. Even though Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso left the Economic Community of West African States, which is often limited by its reliance on outside funding, they are still working with other countries to create new cooperative frameworks and are still talking to their neighbours, like Togo and Ghana. This suggests that they are trying to build new ways to work together for security and political alignment, even though it is still unclear how this will happen. Whether this can at last provide truly African solutions to the continent's challenges and offset the centrifugal forces already at play remains to be seen (Yolaine Frossard de Saugy, January 28, 2025).

Map of Central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger) 1 December 2024



SOURCE: -Burkina Faso and neighbouring Sahel countries face a number of inter-linked challenges, notably the rising threat from jihadist terror and violent extremism ...

-Policy options for Burkina Faso, Guinea, Gabon, Mali and ..., United Nations Development Programme, <https://www.undp.org/files/files/2025-02/a...>

Use diaspora bonds to encourage expatriate investment in the economy. Niger. 1. Promote sustainable rural development through improved land- use policies and ...

People in the central Sahel, especially in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, are still going through serious humanitarian and security crises because of a long-running conflict involving armed Islamist organisations linked to al-Qaeda and the so-called Islamic State Sahel Province. The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project says that more than 12,000 people, mostly civilians, were killed in 2023. At least 2.8 million people have been forced to leave their homes in the region, with almost one million of them living in Burkina Faso alone. The violence is not just caused by attacks from extremist organisations, but also by rising tensions between communities, which often leads to cycles of revenge and widespread abuse. This is because rival ethnic militias and community-based self-defence forces are fighting each other. Armed groups have used tactics like sieges, kidnappings, improvised explosive devices, and landmines to strengthen their control over territory. At the same time, they have broken International Humanitarian Law by blocking humanitarian aid, forcing people to pay taxes, and destroying or stealing civilian infrastructure like schools, healthcare facilities, food reserves, and water systems. Schools have been burnt down, teachers have been threatened, kidnapped, or killed in an effort to weaken the government's power. At the same time, state forces' counterterrorism efforts have often led to further human rights abuses. For example, security personnel in Mali and Burkina Faso have been involved in actions that could be considered war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Africa Corps, a Russian-linked paramilitary group that used to be called the Wagner Group, has been working with the national armed forces in Mali since late 2021 and has reportedly carried out summary killings, sexual violence, torture, and looting. In the same way, state-backed militias like the Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland in Burkina Faso have been linked to violence against people of certain ethnic groups. Military coups in all three countries since 2020 have made the larger political situation even more unstable. Evidence shows that civilian deaths

have sometimes gone up under military rule. For example, in Niger, both insurgent deaths and state-perpetrated abuses, such as arbitrary detentions based on ethnicity, have increased since the coup in July 2023. At the same time, the government has constrained civic space, independent media, and outside criticism of human rights issues. The creation of the Alliance of Sahel States and the group's decision to leave the Economic Community of West African States in early 2024 have made the region even more divided. There are deep-seated structural risk factors that have led to these changes. These include unresolved grievances between communities, the rise of armed groups and militias, a lack of accountability for past and present atrocities, the availability of weapons and trained fighters, and a heavily securitised approach to counterinsurgency that stigmatises certain groups of people and makes violence more likely to happen again.

### **1.The Wagging Intimidated Finger Before Top French Diplomatic Agents Against African Governments Waving Against the French Ambitions**

For a while now, France's reputation in its former African colonies has been bad. President Emmanuel Macron's remarks not long ago might have made the split worse. Emmanuel Macron, the President of France, looks unhappy or even angry in the footage. "I think they forgot to say 'thank you,'" Macron says. He adds, more directly: "I say this for all the African governments who've not had the courage in the face of public opinion to bear it that none of them would be in a sovereign country today if the French army had not been deployed in this region." Macron waves a wagging finger, his eyebrows raised. (David Ehl, 11 January, 2025. <https://p.dw.com/p/4p2OW>; LUDOVIC MARIN/AFP/Getty Images).

Photo No.1: Practical Evidence of Preparing Diplomacy of Retaliation against Africans by the French Authorities



SOURCE: David Ehl, 11 January, 2025. <https://p.dw.com/p/4p2OW>; LUDOVIC MARIN/AFP/Getty Images.

From the photo above, the French President Macron united diplomatic service heads to deliver his new reflection of intimidating Africans who are no longer accepting to be answerable to France's hegemony of neo-colonialism. French ambassadors might have to clarify Macron's remarks to African governments (Image: Aurelien Morissard/AP Photo/picture alliance, online, consulted, march 5, 2025). This scene has been generating intense reactions since Monday. It is a passage from Macron's speech held at the annual meeting of French ambassadors, who left their posts around the world to gather at the Elysee Palace in Paris. Journalists were also invited so Macron must have known that his words would reach a wider audience. Nina Wilen, an analyst at Belgian Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations, told DW that the remarks were likely a strategic error. "And we know that, during visits to Africa, he has also given comments that have not been appreciated by the African leaders, sometimes joking when it wasn't really appropriate to do so," Wilén said. During his first presidential trip to Africa in 2017, Macron caused upset during a casual session with students in Burkina Faso, accompanied by then-President Roch Marc Kabore. He told them it was Kabore's job and not France's to fix the electricity system, since France was no longer a colonial power. When Kabore left shortly for a bathroom break, Macron shouted: "Look, he's leaving to fix the air condition!" a joke which has since been criticized as arrogant. (Image: Aurelien M ).

### 1.1. The Course of French Unhidden International Angers Towards West Africa Intimidated Stance

The situation of France hegemony in the French speaking West African countries has been witnessing diminishing return following the coming up of new smart long leaders who are fully ready to quench down the mechanisms of neo-colonialism which acted more than than six decades as empidements of promoting undevelopment instead of promoting developmental projects especially in Mali, Burkina –Faso and Niger. As pertinent solution to the plights since the 1960s, leaders of the West African regional grouping ECOWAS approved the long-awaited withdrawal of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso from the bloc in December 2024 as measures to weakening the French gripe in the region through that organisation. The three countries have been granted a six-month grace period from January 29, when their exit becomes official, to reconsider their decision. They originally announced their intention to leave in January 2024, a few months after formalising their own regional alliance by signing the Liptako-Gourma Charter. This established what is now known as the Alliance of Sahel States or Alliance des États du Sahel (AES). Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso are all currently led by military juntas, following a series of coups across

Africa's Sahel region since 2020. This wave of military takeovers has earned the region its reputation as the "coup belt" and has drawn widespread international condemnation about the erosion of democratic governance. Yet the coups and their military leaders are supported by many citizens within these countries who see them as liberating forces. In a joint statement released in January 2024, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger outlined several reasons for their decision to withdraw. These included sanctions imposed by Ecowas in response to the coups, accusations that Ecowas member states are influenced by foreign powers, and a lack of support for combating terrorism in the region. Ending French influence also appears to have been a key factor behind the coups and the withdrawal from Ecowas. Some leaders from the AES, such as Burkina Faso's Captain Ibrahim Traoré, have framed their actions as part of a broader struggle to reclaim national sovereignty and stop the neo-colonial exploitation of their countries natural resources. These leaders, as well as some commentators, believe that the heads of many civilian governments in west Africa have been puppets for foreign interests. This sentiment is echoed beyond the AES. Other former French colonies in Africa like Senegal, Chad and the Ivory Coast have demanded the removal of French military forces from their countries. ( **France ends decade of missions in Sahel as last troops ...RFI**, <https://www.rfi.fr> › RFI › France

**22 déc. 2023, French military interventions in the Sahel**, Universiteit Gent, <https://www.ugent.be> › publications

**3 oct. 2024, This study examines how one process, namely Russian influence, impacted coups and French military withdrawals. Niger hosts historic conference on the fight against ...Peoples Dispatch**, <https://peoplesdispatch.org> › nige... **18 nov. 2024; Niger hosts historic conference on the fight against ...Peoples Dispatch**, <https://peoplesdispatch.org> › nige... **18 november 2024**.

The people of *Niger* whose success in forcing their former colonizer *France* on the retreat has inspired Pan-African movements across the continent). French president Emmanuel Macron sparked further anti-French sentiment in the region on January 7. In a speech at the Elysée Palace in Paris, Macron said that countries in the Sahel would not still be sovereign nations had French forces not intervened against Islamist militants. The leaders of Chad and Senegal accused Macron of "arrogance", with Senegalese prime minister Ousmane Sonko asserting that France has "neither the capacity nor the legitimacy" to ensure Africa's security and sovereignty. The approach of AES states to security has remained largely unchanged since they announced their exit from Ecowas. They still rely on foreign support to fight terrorist groups, but now in the form of Russian

mercenaries from the Wagner Group. And, over the past year, we have seen insecurity and terrorist activities escalate across the Sahel. Terrorist organisations such as Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wa al-Muslimeen (JNIM), an umbrella coalition of groups aligned to Al-Qaeda, continue to pose a deadly threat throughout the region as the AES struggles to contain them. On August 24, for example, an attack by JNIM militants in Barsalogo, Burkina Faso, killed 133 people ([France ends decade of missions in Sahel as last troops ...](https://www.rfi.fr/fr/france)(RFI, <https://www.rfi.fr> › RFI › France).

This included civilians who were reportedly digging trenches to protect the town. Since the military coup in September 2022, approximately 15,500 people have been killed in Burkina Faso, with over 6,000 of these deaths occurring since January 2024. Some reports indicate that AES members have increased their use of attack drones, sourced from Turkey and Russia, as part of a strategy to combat terrorist groups. They are also relying on local militia and – in the case of Burkina Faso at least – on forced conscription. Reports of human rights abuses against civilians have raised concerns over the tactics of this new alliance. How the AES will adapt its counterinsurgency strategy in 2025 remains to be seen.( Ezenwa E. Olumba, Bernard Nwosu, Francis Okpaleke, 09 Jan 2025).

While trade between France and Chad is virtually non-existent, the same cannot be said for Niger, where the French majority state-owned nuclear fuel company Orano mines uranium through three of its subsidiaries. Niger's uranium is of strategic importance to France and even Europe, accounting for a quarter of the supply to European nuclear power stations in 2022, according to reports AFP. But the situation is looking rocky as Niger seems determined to regain control over the management of its mining resources, particularly uranium. After Orano suspended production at its mining subsidiary in Niger - 36.6% of which is owned by the Niger state - at the end of October 2024, citing the loss of "operational control", it filed a new arbitration case against Niger at the end of January, accusing the country of "obstructing the commercialisation of [uranium] production". On top of that, Niger now prefers to turn to Russia and Iran, as do Mali, Burkina Faso and the Central African Republic, which also neighbours Sahel. China became Africa's leading trading partner in the first half of 2024, with trade estimated at over €152 billion. No desire to 'sever all relations' However, things look a bit more optimistic in other Sahel states. For the authorities in Burkina Faso, the end of French military presence does not mean the end of diplomatic relations.( [France's military is being ousted from more African ...](https://apnews.com)AP News, <https://apnews.com> › article › fra...

**19 déc. 2024 — Military leaders of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso who expelled the French military have moved closer to Russia, which has mercenaries ...** ). In other words, even though the French Treasury notes lower trade flows in 2023 compared to 2022, as well as a now "uncertain" outlook, things could be looking up. For trade relations with Côte d'Ivoire, things look even more positive for France, with Vircoulon pointing to the "many French companies in the country". Côte d'Ivoire has nearly 300 French subsidiaries, and more than 700 Ivorian companies are run by French nationals. It is France's second-largest customer and fourth-largest supplier in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly for cocoa. By 2023, bilateral trade was worth €2.4 billion, according to France's Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs. For Senegal, the message is also clear: "the desire to move towards the absence of a military presence, not just from France, should not be interpreted as a desire to sever all relations with France," Senegalese President Bassirou Diomaye Faye said in November. But Vircoulon warned of Diomaye Faye's Africa-focused foreign policy, saying it "could slow down economic relations between France and Senegal". Babacar Ndiaye, a self-employed business developer in Saint-Louis, Senegal, works every day to facilitate cooperation between French and European companies and local economic actors. He fears that the tense diplomatic relations between his country and France could affect his business. "It is already complicated to obtain a three-month visa for professional reasons, and I fear that the situation will get worse in the future and that this will compromise our economic projects", he explained. Of course, as it always 'takes two to tango', Vircoulon said it is also important to consider Africa's influence on the French economy - especially as French companies employed 230,000 people on the African continent in 2023. ([France ends decade of missions in Sahel as last troops ...](https://www.rfi.fr/fr/france)(.RFI, <https://www.rfi.fr> › RFI › France22 dec 2023

**3 oct. 2024, Niger hosts historic conference on the fight against ...Peoples Dispatch, <https://peoplesdispatch.org> › nige... 18 nov. 2024).**

Several opposing interpretations contend that France's changing stance in Africa ought not to be viewed as a strategic withdrawal, but rather as a recalibration of its involvement. Emmanuel Macron expressed this viewpoint at the January ambassadors' conference, contending that Paris is embracing a more pragmatic and "clear-sighted" strategy, while simultaneously defending previous military interventions—comments that faced criticism for perpetuating perceptions of paternalism. Scholarly evaluations, like those by Thierry Vircoulon of the French Institute of International Relations, also suggest that Franco-African relations, especially with West Africa, have been getting weaker since the end of the twentieth century.

The current phase is an acceleration of a longer-term structural disengagement. Empirical data corroborate this interpretation: trade between France and sub-Saharan Africa has diminished in relative significance, constituting merely a minor portion of France's total external commerce in recent years. At the same time that France's economy is getting smaller, its military presence on the continent is also getting smaller quickly. This is because vital bases are closing or moving, and defence agreements with numerous countries, such as Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Senegal, and Côte d'Ivoire, are ending. This process, which is often called the slow erosion of "Françafrique," is a result of both growing domestic problems in France, such as fiscal pressures and political contestation, and growing opposition in African countries to a long-term foreign military presence, especially in the Sahel during counterinsurgency operations. The French military's evacuation from key areas like N'Djamena and Niamey, as well as their previous exits from Mali and Burkina Faso, shows a major change in the security situation in the region. At the same time, these changes are happening at the same time as a bigger shift in global politics, as more and more African governments are working with China and Russia and other countries in new ways. So, while France's smaller role may make it easier to redefine post-colonial ties on more equal terms, it also shows a real drop in France's historical power, which is a symptom of a shift toward a more competitive and multipolar external environment in Africa.

After more than a year of rising diplomatic tensions, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali officially left the Economic Community of West African States. Omar Alieu Touray confirmed this publicly on January 29, and large protests in support of the ruling military authorities took place in the capitals of all three countries. People in Niamey and Ouagadougou, for example, said that the withdrawal was a clear and irreversible assertion of sovereignty. This was because many people in these cities were unhappy with ECOWAS, which is often seen as being influenced by outside forces, especially France. Along with their departure, the three governments, which are now part of the Alliance of Sahel governments, announced steps to consolidate their independence. These steps include setting up biometric documentation systems and improving military cooperation between the three countries. Political figures in the region, like Mamane Sani Adamou of the Revolutionary Organization for New Democracy, have looked at ECOWAS's role in a negative light. They say that it has always worked within a larger geopolitical framework shaped by France's strategic interests, such as keeping control over former colonies, balancing regional powers like Nigeria, and shaping regional institutional architecture. This has led these Sahelian states to believe

that leaving the bloc is a necessary step toward redefining political and economic self-determination. (**Policy Response Options for West Africa's Security and ...IMVF - Instituto Marquês de Valle Flôr**, [https://www.imvf.org > uploads > 2025/01 > poli...](https://www.imvf.org/uploads/2025/01/poli...)).

From this point of view, regional institutions are not seen as independent systems of integration but as systems that should still be watched over by outside parties. This concern is shown by claims that the Economic Community of West African States has been affected, at least in part, by financial and political ties to France. Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso officially started to leave in January 2024, but ECOWAS rules said that the decision couldn't take effect for a year. The split started on July 26, 2023, when a coup in Niger removed President Mohamed Bazoum. In response, ECOWAS put in place a combination of political suspension and harsh economic penalties, including as closing borders, freezing assets, and cutting off electricity supply from Nigeria. These actions were largely seen as too harsh and collectively punishing in Niger. The three Sahelian states had to change their strategies quickly because of this growing conflict. In September 2023, they formed the Alliance of Sahel States, which is both a security pact and a way to coordinate their economies more closely. They also planned to send a joint force of 5,000 troops to fight insurgents. Some people in civil society see the new alliance as a major change toward anti-imperialist governance and a stronger national power. They see this as being symbolically strengthened by activities like changing the names of public spaces and kicking foreign military units out of the country. At the same time, institutional divergence has made people even more unsure about the future of ECOWAS, which now has only 12 members. This was especially true on its 50th anniversary, even though its leader, Omar Alieu Touray, said they were willing to keep working together and continue recognizing travel documents and freedom of movement provisions. The adoption of a new biometric passport under the AES framework is also projected to make it easier for people to move between the three states, which is part of a larger process of political and institutional reconfiguration in West Africa.

People in the Sahel are becoming more and more disillusioned with both Western-led military interventions and development models that are thought to have brought only small economic and social benefits. This trend is shown by Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali's growing number of external partnerships. People are especially unhappy with the energy sector. Even though Niger has a lot of natural resources, like big uranium reserves, the region still has some of the lowest levels of electricity generation and access in the world. More than half of the population doesn't

have reliable power. In this light, the Alliance of Sahel States has grown beyond its original focus on security to focus on economic independence and structural growth. This includes working together on energy policies and looking into civilian nuclear power. Burkina Faso and Rosatom have signed agreements to build electricity infrastructure, while Mali is working on a national nuclear framework through its own regulatory bodies. These are concrete moves in the right direction. The AES can be seen as an institutional response to the widespread calls for self-determination and political independence in the region, which have been clearly expressed through ongoing public protests. At the same time, the path of change is still complicated and slow, shaped by the clash between modern reformist goals and long-standing sociopolitical traditions. This dynamic is shown in literary works like Aïcha Fofana's *\*The Anthill\**, which shows the tension between new ideas and old ones. In this respect, even while the current moment marks a major transition in the region's direction, the speed and results of the transformation will probably happen gradually, with both structural limitations and past experiences playing a role.

In August 2015, Idriss Déby publicly called for a decisive break from structural constraints on African development, describing the need to sever enduring economic dependencies; yet, despite such rhetoric, no state has fully exited the CFA franc zone, underscoring the complexity of disentangling entrenched monetary arrangements. Even reformist leaders such as Bassirou Diomaye Faye—who pledged to abandon the CFA system and reduce reliance on institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank—have, in practice, maintained continuity in financial cooperation, reflecting both structural constraints and strategic caution. Historical precedents, including Guinea's withdrawal from the CFA zone in 1960 and the subsequent French-backed Operation Persil, continue to shape contemporary anxieties regarding potential economic destabilization following monetary disengagement. At the regional level, efforts to establish an alternative common currency under the Economic Community of West African States—the proposed “eco”—have been repeatedly delayed, further complicating prospects for monetary independence, particularly amid competing political interests and external influence. In parallel, France has begun recalibrating its Africa policy, seeking to reduce its overt military footprint while preserving strategic access and influence, including through renewed engagement with non-francophone partners such as Nigeria and Kenya. This evolving approach, articulated by figures such as presidential envoy Jean-Marie Bockel, reflects a broader transition from direct presence to more flexible forms of geopolitical engagement. Consequently, while calls for monetary and political autonomy persist across the region,

their realization remains constrained by institutional inertia, geopolitical considerations, and the enduring legacy of historical intervention.

Senegal's President Bassirou Diomaye Faye, who was voted into office in April 2024 on promises of delivering anti-establishment policies and reducing ties with France, has, however, attempted to shake the hold of the language. His official speeches are delivered in both French and the dominant Wolof language. Faye has also moved to set up a new agency that will rename streets and squares across the country to honour locals. France's centuries-long rule of the country was so encompassing that streets, bridges, and squares were named after colonial officers, or bear French words. Scholars say such moves are crucial for a country like Senegal that is eager to rebuild an identity independent of France. “It is part of a process of decolonisation that is to contribute to regaining self-respect and healing the trauma of colonialism,” Ferdinand De Jong, a researcher at the University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom, told Al Jazeera. Just as strong are the economic ties that have fastened France to its former colonies since before independence. Mobile network providers, supermarket chain Auchan or nuclear firm Orano are all French-owned businesses that are now part of the business scene in several French-speaking nations. Although these companies have increasingly been targeted in violent anti-French protests, there is no sign that they plan to leave. Then, there's the common CFA currency zone. (**Martin Barnay, 10 janv. 2025, The Franc Zone — Sidecar, New Left Review, <https://newleftreview.org/posts>**).

Created in December 1945 at a time when calls for independence were already mounting, the CFA currency zone encompasses 14 West and Central African countries. It was originally known as the “franc of the French colonies of Africa”, betraying France's original intentions with the currency. Today it is known as the franc of the African Financial Community and is voluntary. Only Guinea-Conakry and Mauritania left the zone upon independence. Some see the currency as a strong stabiliser against inflation but controversies abound over its terms: Countries must keep 50 percent of their reserves in the French Treasury to keep the currency pegged to France's euro. Many scholars and African leaders note this limits the CFA's growth, and in turn, the economies of the countries using it. Others have called it a neo-colonial tool of the French. (**Martin Branay, 10 janv. 2025**).

Popular resentment against France has festered in “La Francafrique” since colonial times but has now erupted. In the last decade, protesters from Abidjan to Niamey have marched in the streets, blaming France for everything from election interference to instability. However, even as France's military bases close up, analysts say Paris

continues to wield subtle but deep power. From the French language and a common currency among former colonies to phone networks and baguettes, the influence of France is visible and omnipresent in the everyday lives of people across these countries, which could make a total divorce near impossible. France's biggest soft power lies in the reach of the French language. (**France's action in the Sahel, La France en Slovaquie**, <https://sk.ambafrance.org> › *Franc.*..)

The Organisation of French-Speaking Countries said that by 2022, there were almost 300 million French speakers in the world, with about half of them living in Africa. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has the most French speakers outside of France. Over time, the language, which used to have rigorous grammatical rules, has changed a lot in different parts of Africa. In Cameroon, where both French and English are official languages, hybrid phrases like "tu go où" (which means "where are you going") show how everyday conversation has led to the creation of mixed forms of language.

Even with these changes, standard French is still the most common language used in formal settings in many Francophone African countries, such as official announcements, media broadcasts, and academic instruction. In Mali, the transitional military government took away French's official status in August, but the language has remained the main way for the government and professionals to communicate for months after that. Recognizing its lasting impact, Emmanuel Macron's administration started a policy effort in 2018 to make French language instruction more available in key African cities. Macron said in a speech in Burkina Faso that same year that French might become the most important language in Africa and maybe even the world. This positive view is also clear in English-speaking places like Nigeria, where top schools encourage students to learn French as a way to stand out academically and socially (Al Jazeera, Weekly Newsletter, February 2025).

Analysts say that France needs to change how it deals with Africa from a strategic point of view. Jean-Pierre Maulny, Deputy Director of the French Institute for International and Strategic Affairs, says that Paris should stop focusing on short-term crisis management and instead focus on building long-term ties with Francophone African countries. This would mean focusing on development collaboration and shared security frameworks instead of keeping hierarchical or paternalistic relationships going. The French government recently said it will reduce its military

presence across the continent, notably in Gabon and Djibouti, in accordance with this changing view. It would also make its presence more responsive to the needs of the host country. At the same time, France has expanded its economic ties beyond French-speaking areas, with Nigeria and South Africa becoming its main commercial partners.

Still, some people are not sure how long French influence will last in Africa. Thierry Vircoulon, an analyst, says that France's ability to dictate long-term trends on the continent is likely to stay limited, especially as other global players like Russia become more involved. He also says that France's strategic priorities may be shifting more and more toward security issues in Europe itself. Even while this has made France's geopolitical power weaker, structural tools like the CFA franc monetary system, which connects 14 African countries to the French Treasury, and the continuous use of the French language still have a lot of power (Shola Lawal, 31 January 2025).

Recent events show even more how France's military presence in Africa is getting smaller. French troops left Chad before the January 31 deadline, ending more than 60 years of presence there. This is another blow to France's security architecture in its former colonial regions in West and Central Africa. In December, the administration in N'Djamena suddenly cut off military links with Paris, ending an accord that had put some 1,000 French troops in the nation. Chad has long been an important operations center for keeping an eye on insurgency activity in the Sahel and nearby crisis zones like Libya.

This pullout is part of a larger trend in the region where former French colonies, such as Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali, have kicked out or greatly decreased the number of French troops, culminating in the departure of about 4,000 troops. In some circumstances, Russian troops have come in to help with counterinsurgency operations after these withdrawals. Senegal and Ivory Coast, among other countries, have also looked at their defense ties with France again. Beverly Ochieng from Control Risks says that these changes are mostly caused by a greater focus on national sovereignty. She contends that the presence of foreign armed forces is increasingly regarded as antithetical to sovereign state authority, leading governments to dissociate from perceived external meddling (Shola Lawal, 31 January 2025).

French President Emmanuel Macron's provocative comments this week stoked additional tensions, and the

country will begin 2025 by progressively withdrawing its military forces from its former African colonies. Ivory Coast has joined Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso in requesting that France remove its forces from their territory. Chad and Senegal have already followed suit. A number of factors are at play here, including rising anti-French sentiment, demands for more independence, and closer links to other world powers. Nonetheless, the effect is identical. The Africa Center researcher at France's Institute for International Relations, Thierry Vircoulon, stated, "There is a clear collapse of French policy in Africa." "The surrender was symbolized by the French pulling their forces out of Africa and essentially ending their military presence in the continent." Relations between France and Africa have not improved recently. Macron implied on Monday that several Sahel nations had neglected to express gratitude to French forces for leading the charge against Islamist insurgencies for a decade. The leaders of Senegal and Chad were very critical of that. The French government claims that Macron's comments were misquoted. Emmanuel Macron of France and Bassirou Diomaye Faye of Senegal depart from lunch at the Elysee Palace in Paris. Paris, FILE, 20 June 2024; Lisa Bryant, January 11, 2025., among other African nations, has requested that France remove its troops from Senegal's borders. An activist from Benin states, "French neocolonialism is the main cause of our underdevelopment," upon his release from prison. This gathering in Niamey is being organized by the Pan-African movements in response to the ongoing threats that the AES countries are facing. Still, optimism permeates the setting. The anti-colonial movement's triumphs in these three nations are instructive. Among these, Niger is now among the African nations that has paid off its debt. That is noteworthy; it means that one of the world's poorest nations is suddenly considered to have one of Africa's fastest-growing economies. According to Kwesi, most of the countries in the sub-region are weighed down by obviously unmanageable debts, making Mali an exemplary case to follow. The fact that not every country in the area will go in the same direction is obvious, he says. His main point is that the "so-called democratic elections, mass uprisings, or the military coups" that occurred in the AES states are not important; what's important is the result of emancipation from neo-colonialism. Other countries in the region can learn from the Sahel states' experience. The people of Benin are dreaming of a comparable revolution that will usher their nation into the AES. In the long run, Noudjenoume and his supporters aim to "eradicate the colonial borders

drawn to separate the people of the same community with a common native languages and history into separate states" by becoming a federation rather than just a confederation. French colonization, Pan-Africanism, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)'s intervention in Niger, the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) coup in Niger, and more Region of the Sahel: West Africa Peoples' Organization (WAPO) nowadays. In this article, Alex Anfruns examines the Sahel people's fight for independence from colonial rule and economic advancement. In fact, ( The confederation of Sahel States and their struggle ... Peoples Dispatch, <https://peoplesdispatch.org> › the-c...

According to Peoples Dispatch, there has been a significant increase in the expression of resistance narratives in the time leading up to the "Conference in Solidarity with the Peoples of the Sahel" in Niamey on November 9, 2024. These narratives highlight the ability of the Niger population to force France to withdraw its strategic forces, which has sparked Pan-Africanist movements on the whole. This conference, set to take place from November 19th to the 21st, has assembled a transnational assembly that highlights the ideological and geographical breadth of its participants: members of left-oriented political parties, peasant associations, trade unions, and grassroots movements from the Americas, Europe, and Africa. The event, which is being planned by the Pan Africanism Today Secretariat and the West Africa People's Organization, is happening at the same time as what is commonly seen as a break in the framework of "Françafrique" in Sahelian West Africa. It is organized under the themes of anti-imperialist unity, peace, and intersocietal solidarity. This shift has been brought about by a combination of factors, including long-term popular movements against French influence in its former colonies and a series of military interventions in Mali (2020–2021), Burkina Faso (2022), and Niger (2023), which toppled governments that were seen as aligned with French strategic interests. (**The Emergence of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), Centre For Joint Warfare Studies, <https://cenjows.in> › the-emergence** ). The military governments that took over from the French-backed ones did what the protesters wanted and kicked the French troops out of their nations. France had already sent a lot of troops out of Mali and Burkina Faso, and it had sent a lot of them to Niger. At first, France was adamant not to let go of its hold on this country. It called for the return of Mohamed Bazoum as Niger's democratically elected president. (Pavan Kulkarni, November 18, 2024).

*Photo 2: Heads of States of Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali at the First Summit of Alliance of Sahel States.*



SOURCE: Pavan Kulkarni, November 18, 2024. Niger hosts historic conference on the fight against ...Peoples Dispatch, <https://peoplesdispatch.org> › nige...

18 nov. 2024 — The people of *Niger* whose success in forcing their former colonizer *France* on the retreat has inspired Pan-African movements across the continent. (France ends decade of missions in Sahel as last troops ...RFI, <https://www.rfi.fr> › RFI › France

22 déc. 2023, French military interventions in the Sahel, Universiteit Gent, <https://www.ugent.be> › publications

3 oct. 2024, This study examines how one process, namely Russian influence, impacted coups and French military withdrawals.Niger hosts historic conference on the fight against ...Peoples Dispatch, <https://peoplesdispatch.org> › nige... 18 nov. 2024).

*Photo No.3: Youths celebrating French departure from their countries in 2023.*



SOURCES: (France ends decade of missions in Sahel as last troops ...RFI, <https://www.rfi.fr> › RFI › France

22 déc. 2023, French military interventions in the Sahel, Universiteit Gent, <https://www.ugent.be> › publications

3 oct. 2024.Niger hosts historic conference on the fight against ...Peoples Dispatch, <https://peoplesdispatch.org> › nige... 18 nov. 2024).

## 2. The Psychological stresses affecting West African Students Studying in France Provoked by Deep Diplomatic R

In response to the governments of West African States especially Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, France put in place blocking strategies in the educational sectors to the

young aspiring citizens of those countries. Among the most affected are the students resident in France or were having ambitions to continue their studies there through French Government scholarship programmes. The photo of the France Minister of Higher Education and what he declared to young students on studies programme is seen below.

*Photo No.3: Sylvie Retailleau, France's Minister of Higher Education and Research, in Paris, on August 30, 2023.*



SOURCES: LUDOVIC MARIN / AFP; Soazig Le Nevé, France suspends student mobility with Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso, September 16, 2023. University World News, <https://www.universityworldnews.com> › ...

At the end of August, students from the three countries received a message from the French foreign ministry informing them of the cancellation of their stay in France due to an ongoing diplomatic crisis. The e-mail arrived on August 30, two days before Koffi, a student from Burkina Faso pursuing a doctorate in geography, was scheduled to depart for France (the students *Le Monde* spoke to asked not to be identified). "I regret to inform you that we are canceling our support for your stay in France; all Campus France services are canceled (airfare, allowances, and health insurance)," read the message from France's Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs. The decision follows "events in Niamey at the end of July," writes the author of the message, referring to the coup led by generals now in power in Niger. "France has suspended its development aid to Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. This decision also concerns the French government's mobility grants, of which you are a beneficiary".(University World News, <https://www.universityworldnews.com> › ...)

In practical terms, this meant that Koffi could receive €1,500 a month for three months to do research in France. He held a visa valid until February 2024, and travel plans sponsored by Campus France. But Air France

canceled flights because security conditions had worsened and what should have been a two-hour midafternoon flight now offered no clear path to leave, even with a new ticket he had just received. Joseph Ki-Zerbo University of Ouagadougou, and is also affiliated with the Institute of African Worlds in the French National Center for Scientific Research. His story highlights how shifting geopolitical circumstances in the Sahel have created headaches for many people. Simultaneously, the only remaining deployment of over 1,000 French troops under Operation Barkhane was gradually phased out and they had to be either returned to France or redeployed in Chad — the last of the G5 Sahel countries still hosting French soldiers. The resulting truncated withdrawal has caused a considerable erosion of French influence and power in the region, which re-created strategic space for other external players. Scholarly assessments attribute this outcome to several structural shortcomings: the absence of an integrated and sustainable policy framework encompassing security, development, and diplomacy; the ineffective engagement and communication with local authorities which did not succeed in countering entrenched neo-colonial views or competing information campaigns; a miscalculation in establishing partnerships with regimes lacking democratic

legitimacy, thereby undermining policy continuity and adherence as indicated by recent reviews.

In addition to the poor operational outcomes in the Sahel, France faced a similar structural problem: military coups in host governments forced it to end or change its interventions since the new juntas were putting pressure on it. In Mali, contested parliamentary elections in early 2020 that favored Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta led to more unrest in the country, which peaked in the coup on August 18, 2020, led by Assimi Goïta. After that, Bah N'Daw became president as a compromise figure. However, a coup in 2021 strengthened Goïta's power, and the delay of elections in 2022 made tensions with Paris worse, leading to the expulsion of the French ambassador, the redeployment of forces, and the official end of Operation Barkhane. In Burkina Faso, there was a similar path. In January 2022, Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba led a coup that was initially seen as compatible with Western cooperation. In September 2022, Ibrahim Traoré led a second coup that took a more openly anti-French stance. This led to mass protests, a break in diplomatic relations, and the withdrawal of French forces in January 2023, along with the end of Operation Sabre. In response, France changed its approach in the region, moving from unilateral command structures to a reduced-footprint model based on operational partnerships with local forces under the broader framework of "French Forces in the Sahel." It kept some troops in Niger and Chad. Even so, this change was politically unstable, especially in Niger,

where tensions between President Mohamed Bazoum and General Abdourahamane Tiani led to the coup on July 26, 2023. The junta said it was necessary because of worsening security and disputed sovereignty. France's support for possible intervention by the Economic Community of West African States made things worse at home, leading to widespread anti-French protests, the expulsion of the French ambassador, and Emmanuel Macron's announcement on September 24, 2023, of a full military withdrawal, which marked a significant decrease in French strategic influence across the Sahel.

Lieutenant Salim Ibrahim says that the date in question marks the official end of France's withdrawal from the Sahel. This includes the closing of its mission in Niger after its ambassador was recalled to Paris in September. After the July coup, in which members of the presidential guard overthrew President Mohamed Bazoum and set up a military junta, relations between the two countries got much worse. The junta then asked for the withdrawal of about 1,500 French troops who had been fighting jihadist groups in the region. These troops, who were stationed in Niamey and along the borders with Mali and Burkina Faso, began to leave in stages in October. The last group left on a military plane from the French air base in Niamey, as seen by Agence France-Presse reporters. This marked the end of France's military presence in Niger. (<https://www.euractiv.com › news,5 February 2025>).

**Photo No. 4: The last French soldiers board a French military plane to leave Niger for good, at a French base in Niamey that was handed over to the Nigerien army, on 22 December 2023.**



*Source: AFP / BOUREIMA HAMA , RFI Follow. Online, June 2025.*

Since 2022, France has quickly reduced its military presence in the Sahel. This ended with its withdrawal from Niger, following similar withdrawals from Mali and Burkina Faso. All three countries are now ruled by military governments who came to power through recent coups. In each case, these

changes in government have been accompanied by a clear shift in strategy away from France and its Western allies and toward deeper ties with Russia. After the coup in Niger, there was a lot of public hostility to the French presence. This included protests outside French military bases and attacks on

diplomatic buildings, which led to the embassy's suspension for an extended period of time. The ruling junta also showed that it was changing its relationships with other countries by ending military cooperation agreements with the European Union and starting talks with Russian authorities about possible security arrangements at the same time. These changes have made the regional counterinsurgency framework much less certain when it comes to fighting armed groups linked to Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. These groups have caused a lot of deaths and displacement in the Sahel. At the same time, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger signed a formal joint defense agreement in September to work together to deal with Islamist threats. This shows that a new regional security structure is starting to take shape. Before the coup, Niger was an important strategic partner for both France and the United States. However, even though about 1,000 U.S. troops and smaller groups from Italy and Germany are still there, operational cooperation has been greatly reduced until civilian rule is restored. The military has suggested a transition period of up to three years, during which time the ousted president will stay under house arrest. The last French troops leaving the Sahel marks the end of more than ten years of French-led counterterrorism operations there. It also marks a bigger shift in the world of politics, as France has had to pull out of three important states in less than a year and a half, showing that its long-held regional power is fading.

### **3. The beginning of Realistic Developmental Projects in Favour of Common Nationals of AES than ever before in the Three Sahel Countries under Military Regimes**

#### **3.1 Specific Policy Strength of Burkina Faso**

In his inaugural address, Ibrahim Traoré said that Burkina Faso was facing a multidimensional emergency that included security, defense, public health, social welfare, and infrastructure. He also promised to step up counterterrorism efforts and stick to the transitional timetable that had been agreed upon with the Economic Community of West African States for the restoration of constitutional governance by July 2024. However, recent events, such as the country's withdrawal from ECOWAS and its alignment with Mali and Niger within the Alliance of Sahel States, as well as a revised transition framework that allows Traoré to stay in power until at least 2029, show that the political trajectory has changed significantly. Even though these changes in government have happened, Traoré's popularity in his own country and in the region has grown a lot. For example, he was well-received at the inauguration of John Mahama in Ghana on January 7. This is part of a larger trend of younger people becoming more accepting of military-led government. Analysts, including Enoch Randy Aikins at the Institute for Security Studies, say that Traoré's legacy will last longer if the government can turn its large natural resource reserves—like gold, zinc, copper, manganese, phosphates, and other mostly unused reserves—into measurable gains in stability and development. Burkina Faso still ranks poorly on important development indices, even

though macroeconomic data show progress, such as a big increase in GDP and a decrease in extreme poverty over the past few decades. This is because multidimensional poverty affects most of the population. Still, projections for the future show a lot of economic potential. If growth continues on its current path, it could significantly raise per capita income and lower poverty rates by 2043. This shows both the opportunities and structural barriers that will shape the country's long-term development path in a world that is becoming more uncertain.

It is predicted that the level of extreme poverty will drop modestly during the medium term, by around 1 percentage point per year. To speed up the process of getting rid of poverty, there needs to be more growth per person, especially in agriculture, which employs 71% of the poor. The World Bank in Burkina Faso, on October 18, 2024. Burkina Faso is a Sahel country with little natural resources and a poor economy. Agriculture and mining, especially gold mining, are important to its economy. Over 40% of the people that live there are below the national poverty threshold. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) says that Burkina Faso is the 185th best country in the world for human development in its 2023-2024 assessment. On October 21, 2022, Captain Ibrahim Traoré was sworn in as the new transitional president. This happened after the coup d'état on September 30, 2022, which removed Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Damiba from power. On May 25, 2024, the Transitional Charter was changed and passed. The amended wording says that the transition period will last five more years, commencing on July 2, 2024. Since 2015, terrorists have attacked Burkina Faso, forcing people to leave their homes. [...The Conversation, https://theconversation.com › wh... 6 February 2025](https://theconversation.com/wh...6-February-2025).

The number of internally displaced people in Burkina Faso rose from less than 50,000 to about 2.01 million between January 2019 and March 2023, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. This rise in internal displacement reflects the rise in insecurity across the country. This crisis has put a lot of stress on important public services. By December 2023, 413 healthcare facilities—about 20% of the country's total—had been disrupted, making it hard for about 3.8 million people to get medical care. The closure of 5,330 primary and secondary schools, which is also about 20% of the country's total educational infrastructure, has affected over 820,000 students, including nearly 397,000 girls. Burkina Faso, along with Mali and Niger, formed the Alliance of Sahel States on September 16, 2023, as a way to protect each other from ongoing security threats. They then officially left the Economic Community of West African States on January 28, 2024, saying that they didn't get enough help from the region in fighting terrorism.

Despite these structural and humanitarian problems, macroeconomic indicators show moderate resilience. For example, GDP growth sped up to 4.0% year-on-year in the first quarter of 2024 and is expected to reach 3.7% for the year. This is mostly due to consumption and private investment, with above-average performance expected in agriculture—especially cereal production—along with a partial recovery in industry despite ongoing disruptions to mining activities. The services sector is likely to stay stable, thanks to public administration and business activity. At the same time, rising gold export receipts are expected to lower the current account deficit from about 8% to about 6% of GDP. However, inflationary pressures have come back, climbing significantly to 5.7% year-on-year by August 2024 after a time of relative price stability in 2023. This shows how precarious the balance is between economic recovery and ongoing structural weaknesses. (**Burkina Faso, Humanitarian Action**, <https://humanitarianaction.info> › b..., 4 December 2024).

In Burkina Faso, inflationary pressures grew stronger until 2025, with food prices rising sharply by 10.6% year-on-year. This was due to ongoing insecurity, supply chain problems, speculative pricing behavior, and irregular rainfall patterns that delayed the agricultural season. As a result, the average inflation rate for 2024 is expected to be 3.4%. The humanitarian situation is very bad, with more than two million people displaced within their own country and almost 2.7 million people—11.9% of the population—expected to be very food insecure during the lean season in the middle of 2024. Fiscal conditions are partially improving, as the deficit is expected to drop to 5.9% of GDP in 2024, thanks to higher non-tax revenues and lower capital spending. However, financing this gap depends heavily on borrowing from regional markets, where interest rates on short-term instruments have gone over 9%. This will lead to a projected rise in public debt to 54.2% of GDP by the end of the year. As long as the security situation doesn't get any worse and the withdrawal from the Economic Community of West African States goes smoothly—so that trade isn't disrupted too much outside of the West African Economic and Monetary Union—economic growth is expected to stay around 4.0% (1.5% per capita) from 2025 to 2026. Sectoral forecasts show that mining output will start to rise again when new sites open in 2025. Agriculture and services are also expected to stay strong, but not as strong as they were before the conflict. Even though the government is still trying to fix its finances, it seems unlikely that the WAEMU convergence condition of a 3% deficit-to-GDP ratio will be met in the near future. Public debt is expected to keep rising until at least 2026. Extreme poverty is predicted to drop slightly, by about one percentage point every year. However, bigger drops will depend on continued rise in per capita income,

especially in agriculture, which is still the main source of income for most poor people. Overall, the macroeconomic outlook is still very vulnerable to risks that could make things worse, such as more security problems, climate shocks, volatile commodity prices, and regional fragmentation. At the same time, high borrowing costs may make it hard to spend on development while defense and security spending rises.

But for Burkina Faso to really change its structure, it will need to restore security and institutional stability, strategically develop high-potential agro-pastoral and industrial value chains, adopt a diverse and sustainable energy mix, become more involved in regional and international trade systems, and keep making the business environment better to encourage private sector growth. Strengthening macroeconomic governance and financial systems, along with better mobilization of domestic resources, will also be very important for budgetary sustainability. Using new ways to get money, like diaspora bonds and other similar tools, could open up even more ways to get money. In the near future, working with foreign financial institutions will still be very important to get low-interest loans and technological help, especially to make the mining industry run better and more efficiently. In the medium term, it may be possible to use non-concessional financing tools for big, long-term infrastructure and development projects. These tools could include partial guarantees and blended credit mechanisms to make sure that the projects are cost-effective and financially sound. (**African Economic Outlook (AEO) 2024**). Prison improvements have been implemented in Burkina Faso. Agriculture is now open to prisoners and those awaiting trial. The new law decreases their punishment by three months for each month of employment. "As their sentences are shortened, our prisoners will begin working in agriculture as of today," said President Ibrahim Traoré. African ideals must be reflected in our laws. He went on to say that many African countries continue to employ rehabilitation and punishment pr... In Burkina Faso, prisoners and those awaiting trial can now work in agriculture. One month of work reduces their sentence by three months under the new law. President Ibrahim Traoré stated, "From today, our prisoners will work in agriculture while their sentences are reduced. Our laws must reflect African values." He added that many African nations still use colonial-era punishment and rehabilitation methods. He introduced new uniform (**Brown Omadju, 21 February 2025**). In a bold move to address housing shortages and improve living conditions, Burkina Faso's President Ibrahim Traoré has initiated the construction of 1,000 social housing units. Launched on July 12, 2024, approximately 40 kilometers from Ouagadougou, this project aims to provide shelter for internally displaced persons (IDPs) affected by ongoing security challenges. The initiative underscores President Traoré's commitment to ensuring that every Burkinabè has access to adequate housing by 2030. The President of Burkina Faso, Ibrahim Traore, is building free houses for his citizens.

26 February 2025. Concerted efforts, President Traoré envisions a future where every citizen has access to quality housing, contributing to the nation's sustainable development and social welfare. **(Brown Omadju, 21 February 2025).**

The housing units are strategically distributed across various regions to maximize impact: Centre-North Region: 800 units spread across four sites, Ouahigouya (North Region): 100 units, Nagréongo (Plateau-Central Region): 50 units, Bobo-Dioulasso (Hauts-Bassins Region): 50 units. The total cost of the project is estimated at approximately 5.23 million CFA francs (around \$8,500). In line with his vision, President Traoré has emphasized that funding for these housing projects will not involve deductions from citizens' salaries. Instead, his administration is focusing on streamlining government expenditures to reallocate resources toward essential infrastructure and social programs. On November 4, 2024, he directed his ministers to review departmental spending, aiming to reinvest savings into critical areas such as housing, potable water, and food security. This approach marks a significant shift from previous proposals. In December 2022, the government considered a 1% deduction from public and private sector workers' net salaries to fund security initiatives, specifically to support the Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland (VDP). However, the current housing initiative relies on optimizing existing resources without imposing additional financial burdens on the populace. President Traoré's dedication to enhancing public infrastructure is further evidenced by reforms introduced in December 2024. These reforms position the Ministry of Housing at the forefront of all public project phases, ensuring that constructions adhere to stringent technical, environmental, and safety standards. This strategy aims to enhance the quality and longevity of public works, maximizing the impact of public investments for the benefit of all Burkinabè citizens. Through these concerted efforts, President Traoré envisions a future where every citizen has access to quality housing, contributing to the nation's sustainable development and social well-being **( UNHCR, 28 February 2025, Project 21 ).**

However, Traoré's popularity goes beyond acceptance of military rule. He has embarked on radical reforms that resonate with many Burkinabè. These include reversing his predecessor's salary increase for government officials while he remains on his military captain earnings. As part of efforts to take ownership of mineral resources, Traoré has nationalised two gold mines and stopped exporting unrefined gold to Europe – instead inaugurating a national gold refinery expected to process 150 tonnes annually. Other significant achievements include establishing the National Support Center for Artisanal Cotton Processing, building a new airport, and considerable agricultural investment. While these are noble attempts to industrialise Burkina Faso, the country must not fall into the usual traps of inefficiencies, corruption and mismanagement that characterise most African state-owned enterprises. Further, Traoré has rejected financial assistance from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank,

insisting the country can develop without the West's loans and conditionalities. For some, this is a demonstration of Africans handling their own affairs. For the youth, Traoré's regime is a chance to show what young people can achieve. But for most ordinary Burkinabè, the priority is simply improving their daily living conditions. At a time of increasing global uncertainty and a decline in international aid, Africa must strive for self-reliance and control of its resources. Like many African countries, Burkina Faso is blessed with natural resources that, if properly managed, could transform citizens' lives **(Enoch Randy Aikins ,24 April 2025).** The second task is to focus on building strong institutions and prioritise reforms that strengthen existing institutions to improve public sector efficiency and combat corruption, which has been the bane of many African leaders. It is also essential to empower local governments through decentralisation by providing them with the resources and capacity to implement development programs tailored to local needs. While leadership and individual charisma are key to achieving good governance, they must transcend personality to institutions to ensure longevity and continuity. Thirdly, in the medium term, the country needs to transition into constitutional rule to ensure political stability, inclusion and legitimacy to drive economic growth. This will also enhance investor confidence, allowing Burkina Faso to attract the needed foreign direct investment for its development. In this regard, the African Union, civil society organisations and development partners should support the 60-month transition plan to ensure a smooth transition to democratic rule. With a young, strong, and charismatic leader, Burkina Faso has a golden opportunity to get its governance right and drive its developmental aspirations. This can be a lasting legacy for Captain Traoré's regime. **(Enoch Randy Aikins).** According to Naija, Comfort Ikechukwu in Breaking News: North Korea Sends 500 Troops to Burkina Faso — Issues Deadly Warning to Nigeria: “Harm One, Lose 200” as China and Russia Join Forces. Tensions are boiling over in West Africa as North Korea deploys 500 troops to Burkina Faso, joining Chinese and Russian military forces in a bold show of power. In a chilling message to the Nigerian government, North Korea warned: “If a single North Korean soldier is harmed, Abuja will pay the price — 200 Nigerian troops will be eliminated in retaliation.” The situation is intensifying, raising fears of a broader international conflict on African soil. (<https://dailyexcessive.com/.../breaking-news-north-korea.../SteelBase Dominik>). **North Korea Military Support to Burkina Faso's President, North Korea Steps In to Defend Ibrahim Traore Against ...).**

### 3.2 Malian Specific Development Initiatives

For Mali, Bamako, 21 January 2025 – The Government of Mali and humanitarian partners have announced the launch of the 2025 Humanitarian Response Plan for Mali. This plan aims to address the urgent and vital needs of the most vulnerable people affected by armed conflict, displacement, health emergencies, and climate shocks. The Government of Mali and humanitarian partners are calling for the mobilization of

\$771.3 million to provide emergency assistance to 4.7 million people, 78% of whom are women and children. The humanitarian context in Mali is characterized by a volatile security situation that has persisted for over a decade, compounded by structural vulnerability, socio-economic challenges, and the climate crisis. The situation is particularly dire in conflict-affected areas in northern and central Mali, where access constraints and mass displacement threaten the survival and dignity of the most vulnerable. This plan has been developed in a fully inclusive and participatory manner, in line with the vision and strategic choices of Malian authorities for partnerships and prioritizing the interests of affected populations. Through this plan, the humanitarian community reaffirms its collective commitment to a response based on humanitarian principles. It supports national efforts to give communities a chance for recovery and hope. Humanitarian Response in 2025 focuses on populations with critical needs in key sectors, such as protection, education, food security, health, nutrition, shelter and basic household items, as well as water, sanitation and hygiene. “There is an urgent need for the entire humanitarian community and donors to renew their commitment to addressing basic humanitarian needs. We should also explore innovative and sustainable solutions, in partnership with development actors, to maintain progress and strengthen the resilience of communities facing the impacts of climate shocks and protracted displacement,” states the Acting Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr. Khassim Diagne. Mr. Diagne commended the Malian government's leadership and efforts in the humanitarian response. He also thanked donors for supporting humanitarian response in Mali in 2024, particularly following the severe flooding that hit the country. In 2024, merely 38% of funding required for the Humanitarian Response Plan was mobilized. Despite this shortfall and access constraints, humanitarian partners provided lifesaving assistance to 1.8 million vulnerable people, including those in the most remote areas. (UN OCHA , Mali, 21 January 2025; **Ramatoulaye Moussa Mazou, The 2025 Humanitarian Response**).

Mali lifts mining permits suspension has triggered a wave of change across the nation's mining regulations. The decision to suspend permits in November 2022 marked a turning point in Mali's approach to resource management. Political, economic and regulatory concerns have all contributed towards this move. This reform comes as Mali lifts mining permits suspension to regain industry stability. March 8, 2025 .Mali's strategic decision emerged from decades of accumulated administrative inefficiencies. Authorities opted for a complete overhaul of the existing process. The aim was to create a system built on transparency and simplicity. Many observers note that this approach could help mitigate the sort of mining turmoil that has destabilised several resource sectors in other regions. Government experts remarked that inefficiencies used to cause delays and corruption in processing permits. Moreover, political pressure and international scrutiny encouraged management reforms. Influential industry figures have since noted that contemporary governance models can

restore investor confidence and safeguard Mali's natural wealth. The suspension primarily targeted outdated systems that hampered job opportunities and fair competition. The government intended to reduce the risk of mismanagement and promote clearer regulatory practices. Economic experts believe that improved procedures eventually support broader national economic growth. Key motivations for the suspension included: Enhancing transparency in permit allocation and monitoring. Reducing administrative bottlenecks that led to corruption. ( **Mali's Mining Permit Suspension Lift March 8, 2025** ). Some discussions even compared these tactics with ferroalloy strategies applied abroad, which focused on competitiveness and revitalisation within the industry. The introduction of the new 2023 mining code is a groundbreaking reform in the sector. Among the notable adjustments: Increased tax obligations on mining companies. More rigorous regulatory oversight designed to meet international standards. These modifications intend to attract high-quality investments and establish a robust legal framework. The changes also empower communities by ensuring that economic benefits are more evenly distributed. In another related development, discussions about government dispute have surfaced, highlighting broader conflicts between industry players and regulatory authorities. Such debates emphasise the need for a balanced approach in reform efforts. Starting 15 March, the government introduced a partial lift on the suspension. This measured change allows the renewal and transfer of certain permits while still blocking completely new applications. Permit applications now include: Renewal of existing search and exploitation permits. Transition from search to exploitation permits. Transfer of exploitation permits among established operators. This strategic decision supports continuity in operations, yet preserves high standards for new permit evaluations. Experts argue that these measures ensure that the nation maintains control while fostering responsible industry growth. In addition, a recent reuters report highlighted the cautious optimism among investors. ( **Ba Boubacar, 17 June , 2021** ). Their findings suggest that the partially restored permit processing is only one facet of a broader regulatory overhaul. Some elements of permit processing remain on hold. The current restrictions include: Allocation of entirely new mining permits. Transfer of search permits. Comprehensive “cleaning up” of the mining register. The register cleanup is especially crucial. ( **Ba Boubacar, 17 June ,2021** ). It aims to verify current permits and eliminate any inconsistencies. Such systematic checks are expected to renew international trust in Mali's mining framework. The suspension of some aspects ensures that the reforms are implemented carefully. Many industry specialists believe that gradual changes can lead to sustainable improvements, minimising risk during the transition period. The new framework requires companies to adapt their practices quickly. Mining firms must now operate within a more complex administrative system. Key areas they need to address include: Conforming to higher tax and compliance standards. Adjusting internal processes to meet stringent permit renewals. Managing increased regulatory

oversight. Some companies are even seeking legal consultation amidst these changes. Analysts highlight the importance of resolving mining disputes quickly to maintain operational continuity in this evolving landscape. Furthermore, the suspension and its partial lift have prompted companies to invest in better technology. Recent advancements have helped several firms comply with the new legislation. For example, some companies are using specialised software updates promoted by mining technology outlets. Mali's reforms have broader economic and geopolitical implications. Industry experts suggest that as Mali lifts mining permits suspension, investors can expect improved fiscal stability and enhanced security in mining zones. The measures appear to counteract previous volatile conditions that impacted national revenues (**Ramatoulaye Moussa Mazou, OCHA Mali, 2025** ).

Several external factors have contributed to this decision. Increased global demand for minerals has placed pressure on Mali to modernise its systems. International comparisons, such as a recent discussion on copper rally, reflect similar trends in resource markets worldwide. Furthermore, geopolitical tensions in the region require careful navigation. Countries must balance internal reforms with external expectations. As debates continue, a broader consensus is emerging that stable mining regulation benefits both investors and local

communities alike. Across the continent, several mining countries are reviewing and adjusting their regulations. Many have taken note of Mali's recent decision and are planning similar reforms. Industry peers have raised questions regarding the efficient use of natural resources and the role of government oversight. Key reactions include: Encouragement of transparent regulatory practices. These points mirror the original objectives behind Mali's decision. As the region continues to evolve, many regulators are increasing international dialogue to ensure best practices in governance. Environmental considerations play a critical role in mining reforms. The suspension helped isolate unsustainable practices that harmed local ecosystems. Today, Mali's enhanced regulations stress both economic and environmental priorities. Policymakers aim to balance growth with responsible environmental stewardship. Mining companies are now expected to operate under stricter environmental laws. These standards are designed to protect community water sources and reduce waste. By doing so, Mali hopes to set a positive precedent for other emerging markets. Striking this balance remains one of the most challenging tasks for government regulators. It is equally vital to address community concerns and protect biodiversity. Many international observers see Mali's reform as a model for sustainable development. (**Mali's Mining Permit Suspension Lift March 8, 2025** ).

*Photo No. 5: Kenmare Resources: Strategic Mineral Sands Acquisition and Market Dynamics*



Sources: [Mali Overview: Development news, research, data, World Bank, https://www.worldbank.org > over...](https://www.worldbank.org)

-7 oct. 2024 — For the 2021-2025 period, the strategy focuses on the following priorities: Supporting the response to COVID-19 by backing the banking sector ... Mali: 2024 in Review and the Surprising Plans for 2025 by ...YouTube · Uplifting Africa, 5 janv. 2025, Mali makes progress towards organising delayed transition ...Facebook · CGTN Africa, 12 déc. 2024

The World Bank approved a US\$100 million loan through the International Development Association on January 22, 2025, in Washington, D.C. The loan will help Mali improve water security by making it easier for people to get clean water and protecting water resources in certain urban areas. The Mali Water Security Support Project (PASEMa) is in charge of the project. Its main goals are to improve service delivery in Bamako, especially on the left bank, as well as in Mopti/Sévaré, San, Ouélessébougou, Dioila, and Bafoulabé/Mahina. The planned infrastructure expenditures include building a pumping station and a 2,000 m<sup>3</sup> water tower in Missira, connecting Djikoronipara, the Missira station, and Kati-Sud, and making it easier for households to join to the drinking water network. The project will build water supply systems in secondary cities that can deliver about 24,000 cubic meters of water per day. These systems will include production units, pumping stations, three more water towers (each with a capacity of 2,000 m<sup>3</sup>), a semi-underground reservoir (1,000 m<sup>3</sup>), distribution networks, and public access points in areas just outside of the city. Leak detection technology can be used to reduce system losses, improve service quality, and make operations more efficient. Environmental precautions can also be taken to protect water sources in the Niger River and Senegal River basins. Clara de Sousa said that the initiative is meant to fix short-term problems with water access while also laying the groundwork for long-term sectoral resilience and economic growth. About 500,000 people will benefit from this, with about half of them being women and 19.2% being young people. An additional 30,000 rural residents will see their ecosystems restored through nature-based solutions.

The Council of the European Union decided to extend the EUCAP Sahel Mali's mandate until January 31, 2025. They also gave it more than €73 million for the period from February 2023 to January 2025. At the same time, they changed the EUCAP Sahel Mali's operational scope to reflect the changing political and security situation in Mali. The mission's new mandate includes helping the National Police and other Internal Security Forces (ISF) move to southern regions and, if possible, to central areas of the country. This shows a flexible approach that takes into account the current security situation. EUCAP Sahel Mali is a civilian capacity-building initiative that started on January 15, 2015, and is based in Bamako. It works with the European Union delegation and other international partners, such as the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, to help with security sector reform by giving advice and technical help. This decision is part of a bigger strategic review of the EU's involvement in the Sahel through its Common Security and Defense Policy. The EU has sent multiple missions to the region, including the European Union Training Mission in

Mali, which trains and advises the Malian armed forces to make them more effective, the EUCAP Sahel Niger, which fights organized crime and terrorism, and the newer EU Military Partnership Mission Niger, which aims to improve Niger's ability to fight armed extremist groups in the region.

### 3.3 New Policy Initiatives in Niger

Following Niger's president, Mohamed Bazoum, was overthrown by his presidential guard on July 27, 2023, the country would continue to be politically unstable and under military administration for a long time following the 2024–25 prediction period. (There is a coup in Niger that removes the president.) As EIU feared, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) placed strict economic, financial, commercial, and political sanctions on Niger after the coup. These penalties have not brought Mr. Bazoum back to power, mainly because the military has great support from the people. We think that in 2024, the junta and ECOWAS will reach an agreement on a political transition to civilian administration. This will make it possible to lift the sanctions. (Niger's economy suffers because of ECOWAS sanctions) The economy will become better when the Niger-Benin oil pipeline starts exporting oil in early 2024. This will help make up for some of the fiscal and growth shortages imposed by the sanctions. (Oil shipments through the Niger-Benin pipeline are expected to start in January 2025, according to an online consultation.) After the coup, the IMF stopped working with Niger, and Western countries stopped giving it important financial aid. The farm industry will help GDP growth, but bad weather will still be a problem. After the coup, relations between Niger and France fell apart. The last French troops left the nation in December 2023. (French troops forced to leave the nation). Niger, along with Mali and Burkina Faso, will turn to Russia even more to fight the growing menace of radical Islamists. In the dry, wide-open spaces of rural Niger, there is one tree that stands strong. Thanks to Ollivier Girard Every parent wants their kids to do well and prosper. To do this, kids need to be able to get basic social services like health care and school. But in rural Niger, these services are often still out of reach, which puts families at risk. Every day, parents in distant villages have a hard time keeping their kids healthy and in school. But recent changes in the country are giving these families hope. Local pharmacies are running out of fewer medicines and vaccines, which is a clear example of how better governance is converting problems into chances for people in Niger. Niger is the biggest country in West Africa, with 1.267 million square kilometers. It is in the middle of the Sahel. But the landlocked country has a lot of problems. It has one of the worst access to essential services in the world. Security threats, climate change, pandemics, and political instability make these problems much

worse. Yolaine Frossard de Saugy, January 28, 2025. Niger has one of the fastest-growing populations in the world, and 80% of its people live in rural areas. This makes it very hard for the government to provide basic social services to its people. In July 2023, a coup made things worse by stopping international help, which made it harder for the government to pay for important services. But Niger is still working hard to enhance government and public services, and it is coming up with new methods to turn problems into progress. To deal with these ongoing problems, Niger has started a number of public financial reforms. The government looked at all of its financial management systems in 2020 and came up with the 2021–2025 reform strategy. The Niger Public Sector Management for Resilience and Service Delivery Program started in 2022 with \$191.5 million from the World Bank. The main goal of this project is to make better use of public funds and manage human resources better, especially in health and education. The idea is to make sure that people who need them the most get the things they need, like immunizations, medicines, and school materials. After the coup in July 2023, when international borders closed and aid stopped, Niger reacted by focusing on collecting taxes from its own citizens. This method made guaranteed that civil servants got paid and that important public services kept going even when trade and customs revenue went down. The government, international partners, and civil society all need to work together for these changes to work. Flexibility and capacity building have been important for making sure that projects keep moving forward by meeting changing needs. (Mahaman Sani Kanta, Murielle Babatounde, December 11, 2024). The effects of these changes are evident and important. In 2023, healthcare gave out more than 11 million vaccine shots, helping more than 1 million kids and 1.3 million pregnant women. By the end of 2023, stock shortages of important medicines had gone down from 16 days to just 9 days. In education, timely budgetary allocations allowed the Ministry of Education to buy 3.4 billion CFA francs (\$5.4 million) worth of school materials for rural schools. This work made a big difference in the amount of resources available to urban and rural schools, giving more kids the tools they need to do well. Niger's experience shows how important it is to keep making changes and work together. The government and its partners may keep making progress by learning from both their achievements and their failures. Niger's resilience shows how strategic governance that is customized to local circumstances may help people deal with big problems by putting their needs first and improving the management of public finances. The country's efforts provide its citizens optimism and are a good example for other countries who are having the same problems. (Mahaman Sani Kanta and Murielle Babatounde, December 11, 2024).

The World Bank's Doing Business Report put Niger, the world's fourth largest producer of uranium, at 131st place out of 190 countries. This was an advance of eleven places from the previous year, when the country was in 143rd place. Since 2010, the changes made to strengthen the business climate have worked. Also, the country's growth has sped up in the last several years. Niger's economy is expected to increase by 5.1% in 2019, thanks to agriculture, which has benefited from good weather and efforts to make farming more productive, even though there are security problems and uranium prices have dropped. But growth is anticipated to decrease to 1.0% in 2020 since the COVID-19 pandemic has hurt the economy. The economy of Nigerien grew at a steady 7.0% in 2018. The primary and tertiary sectors were responsible for this growth, adding 2.6 points and 3.2 points, respectively. Niger's growth, on the other hand, stagnated in 2019 because it relied on unreliable agricultural production, extractive activities with unstable international prices, and ongoing security risks. In 2019, Niger's growth rate is predicted to be 5.1%, however because of the COVID-19 health crisis, it will drop to 1.0% in 2020. Niger's economy depends a lot on the primary sector, which includes farming and raising animals. In 2020, growth in the primary industry is expected to be 1.5%, down from 4.9% in 2019 and 7.1% in 2018. The investments made under the I3N initiative (Initiative les Nigériens Nourrissent les Nigériens), which started in 2011, have helped the primary sector do well. The primary sector in Niger grew in 2018 because of good weather and the fact that more crops were being grown in irrigated areas (+28.8%). Fishing production went up a little in 2018 (+2.7%) since the Lake Chad area was a little calmer. The livestock industry stayed strong (+4.7% in 2018 compared to +4.2% in 2017) thanks to the good performance of the 2017–2018 agricultural season, which made more fodder available for animals. The secondary sector is expected to grow by 0.6% in 2020, down from 8.8% in 2019. So, in 2020, the secondary sector would make up 18.3% of GDP, down from 18.5% in 2019 and 18.1% in 2018. (Niger Country Information Note, UMOA-Titres, September 2020) Along with uranium production in the extractive sectors, manufacturing and construction are the most important parts of the secondary industry. The tertiary sector's share of GDP would rise slightly from 25.5% in 2019 to 25.8% in 2020. It was 25.4% in 2018. But trade and other services still make up a large part of the Nigerien economy's tertiary sector. The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to have a big negative effect on the tertiary sector, with growth estimated to be only 0.3% in 2020, down from 6.6% in 2019. The World Bank's Doing Business Report for 2020 says that Niger is the fourth best country in the WAEMU region for business climate changes. Since 2010, the country's key changes have sought to make it easier to

get power, get construction licenses, pay taxes, get credit, and safeguard minority owners in firms. The Nigerian government set up a five-year plan called the Economic and Social Development Plan (PDES) in 2017. It will run from 2017 to 2021. The fundamental goal of this plan is to improve people's quality of life by promoting strong, long-lasting, resilient, and inclusive economic growth. The PDES is built on five fundamental ideas: cultural renaissance, social development and demographic transition, faster economic growth, better governance, peace and security, and long-term environmental management. All of this is meant to make the economy more diverse, make the private sector stronger, and eventually, keep the high population increase and gender inequality in check. The 100-megawatt Goroubanda power plant, which was the main project of the PDES, was built to fix power outages and boost corporate production. The major oil projects, building up the economy's infrastructure, and continued investment in agriculture through the 3N Initiative and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) are all expected to happen in 2020. (Niger Country Information Note, UMOA-Titres, September 2020).

On January 15, 2025, Transparency International Defence & Security released a set of policy briefs that looked at how well the defense and security sectors in Nigeria, Tunisia, Niger, and Mali were able to withstand challenges. The briefs placed their analysis in a larger context of democratic backsliding, political instability, and rising security threats across the region. Using the Government Defence Integrity Index, the briefs give a data-driven, comparative look at how corruption can happen in defense governance. They take into account country-specific factors like recent political events, military spending patterns, arms procurement processes, and how the public views governance. Michael Ofori-Mensah stressed that the results show that transparency and accountability are not just moral standards, but also necessary for security institutions to work well and stay stable. This is because corruption directly hurts peace and the performance of institutions. The papers also make specific legislative suggestions that were made with the help of national civil society groups to make oversight mechanisms stronger, make things more open, and make accountability frameworks stronger. The analysis of Niger reveals a significant lack of transparency regarding defense spending, procurement practices, and the management of military assets. It calls for increased civil society involvement and the incorporation of corruption risk mitigation into military operations. In Mali, systemic governance deficiencies enable the misappropriation of military resources and the practice of influence-peddling, further aggravated by non-transparent procurement systems that hinder public oversight. Consequently, the implementation of stringent auditing processes and the

transparency of procurement data are proposed as crucial steps to promote enduring institutional resilience and ensure overall political and economic stability.

## CONCLUSION

The current trajectory of West Africa in the twenty-first century continues to attract sustained international scholarly and policy attention, particularly in the fields of international relations and state-building, due to persistent tensions among resource governance, political legitimacy, and external influence that remain inadequately addressed. A fundamental assertion of this discourse is that substantive national development is unattainable without leadership that is both responsive and accountable to the socio-economic interests of the populace, particularly concerning the management and utilization of natural resources. When external players are seen as taking too much advantage of these resources for their own strategic or economic gain, frequently at the price of local wellbeing, the accompanying anger has traditionally led to political unrest and ideological resistance. Recent events in Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso show a larger trend in which military-led governments have framed their actions as necessary corrections to protect national sovereignty and fight what they call neo-colonial economic structures that grew out of cooperation agreements made after independence. Younger people have really connected with this story, which is based on their growing political awareness and their desire for self-determination and a rejection of what they see as outside control, which is often thought of as a "exclusive sphere of influence" held by former colonial powers. In July 2024, the leaders of the three Sahelian republics officially agreed to a confederal structure in a summit in Niamey. This was a big change in the political alignments in the region. Abdourahmane Tiani, Ibrahim Traoré, and their Malian counterparts led the states to leave the Economic Community of West African States. They said this was because they thought France and other outside forces were interfering and that they weren't getting enough help to deal with security threats in the region. The Alliance of Sahel States was formed as a confederation of over 72 million people. Its goal is to improve political, economic, and security cooperation among the member states while also promoting a shared agenda of strategic independence. The bloc has set itself up as a different regional structure, with its leaders saying that it is a better way to deal with ongoing insurgencies linked to Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, especially in the unstable tri-border area. Concurrently, the three states have pursued a deliberate reorientation of external partnerships, distancing themselves from traditional Western allies and engaging instead with actors such as Russia, Turkey, and Iran, which they portray as more aligned with their sovereignty-driven objectives.

Even though ECOWAS lifted the sanctions it put in place after the 2023 coup that removed Mohamed Bazoum, relations between the regional bloc and the AES states are still tense. This is because West Africa is going through a process of geopolitical realignment and normative contestation over governance, legitimacy, and the role of outside actors in shaping the region's future.

The first trilateral summit of the Sahelian military leaders—Abdourahamane Tiani of Niger, Ibrahim Traoré of Burkina Faso, and Assimi Goïta of Mali—came after a number of previous bilateral meetings. It was a big step toward bringing the three states together politically after their coups, which took place between 2020 and 2023. Observers like Gilles Yabi said that the summit in Niamey was a planned show of unity and commitment to a shared agenda based on sovereignty, which included plans for deeper integration and the possible creation of a common currency. This strategic direction has been happening at the same time as calls from regional leaders, especially Bassirou Diomaye Faye and Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani, for renewed talks between the Sahelian bloc and the Economic Community of West African States. However, the presence of competing summits has only made the differences between the two sides more clear. Analysts say that reconciliation may require ECOWAS to make institutional concessions instead of bringing the Sahel states back together. The official founding of the Alliance of Sahel States on September 16, 2023, and its later transformation into a confederal framework, marks a clear break from previous regional alliances and a reaffirmation of collective defense principles. This is reflected in a charter that requires member states to help each other if their sovereignty or territorial integrity is threatened, which has led to comparisons to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The AES has tried to make itself look like an independent security architecture that can deal with threats from insurgents and outside intervention, but it's not certain how long it will be able to stay together as a regional bloc. Structural limitations—such as restricted economic capacity, ongoing regional fragmentation, and the lack of widespread international legitimacy—present considerable obstacles to its transformation into a functional counterpart of NATO, despite its growing external alliances with entities like Russia, China, and Turkey. Consequently, although the AES embodies a nascent type of sovereignty-centered regionalism, its potential to beyond mere symbolic alignment and attain sustainable institutional integration will hinge on its capability to harmonize internal limitations with the intricate geopolitical dynamics of the Sahel.

Security in the region has already been compromised by Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger leaving ECOWAS. Some ECOWAS members and the AES have been accusing each

other of things, and they haven't been working together to fight terrorism in the Sahel. This may have led to further attacks by extremist groups. For example, in late December, Niger accused Nigeria of secretly cooperating with France to make the country less stable. Nuhu Ribadu, Nigeria's national security adviser, told BBC Hausa that the claims were "baseless" and "false." When Mahama was sworn in on January 7, the throng in Black Star Square in Accra, the capital of Ghana, gave Captain Traoré of Burkina Faso a loud cheer. The popularity of AES leaders, especially Traoré, is growing in French-speaking countries in the region and is now expanding to English-speaking countries like Ghana.(09 Jan 2025) Ezenwa E. Olumba, Bernard Nwosu, and Francis Okpaleke. AR, Senegal (AP) — France's relationship with its former colonies in Africa has been rocky this month. Its power on the continent is facing its toughest challenge in decades. As Paris was coming up with a new military plan that would cut its permanent soldier presence in Africa by a large amount, two of its closest friends delivered a double blow. Chad's government, which France sees as its most stable and faithful partner in Africa, said on its Independence Day that it was terminating defense cooperation to reestablish its independence. And in an interview with *Le Monde* that came out a few hours later, Senegal's new president claimed it was "obvious" that French soldiers would not be on Senegalese soil for long. President Bassirou Diomaye Faye said, "Just because the French have been here since the time of slavery doesn't mean it's impossible to do things differently." The announcements occurred at a time when France was trying to regain some of its lost power on the continent. Jean-Noël Barrot, the foreign minister, was finishing off a trip to Chad and Ethiopia. For the first time, President Emmanuel Macron admitted that the French Army killed as many as 400 West African soldiers in 1944. After Chad's declaration, the French government didn't say anything for almost 24 hours. When they did, they said they were in "close dialogue" about the future of the alliance.(Macron's policy in Africa ). Ivory Coast takes over the last French post as the French military leaves. France gives up its last military base in Chad. Mucahid Durmaz, a senior analyst at global risk consultancy Verisk Maplecroft, stated, "Chad's decision marks the final nail in the coffin of France's post-colonial military dominance in the entire Sahel region," which is the dry area south of the Sahara. Durmaz went on to say that Senegal and Chad's moves are part of a larger change in the way the area interacts with France, in which Paris's political and military power is steadily declining. In Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso, military-led administrations have kicked out French troops in recent years. This is because local people were unhappy after years of French troops battling alongside local troops against stubborn Islamic extremist insurgencies. Last

month, Jean-Marie Bockel, Macron's personal envoy for Africa, gave Macron his report on how the French military involvement in Africa has changed over time. Macron talked on "renewing our partnership with African countries" at a speech in Burkina Faso in 2017, when he was just starting his presidency. No one has seen the details of Bockel's report yet. Three high-ranking French officials, who asked to remain anonymous because they were talking about sensitive talks with the countries in question, said that France wanted to sharply cut back on its military presence at all of its bases in Africa except for Djibouti, where Macron is expected to visit in the next few days. The officials added that this doesn't mean that France would stop working with other countries on military matters. Instead, it would respond to what those countries say they need. It could require giving more specific instruction on how to watch over airspace with drones and other planes. France might potentially send troops to other countries for a short time. The officials wouldn't say how many troops would be cut, but they did say it was a big deal. Earlier this year, the French army set up a command for Africa, which is akin to the U.S. AFRICOM. Pascal Ianni, the new commander, is an expert in information and influence warfare. This is a skill that is becoming more important as Russia's footprint in Africa grows. "You may keep working together in the military like a lot of countries do. Will Brown, a senior policy scholar at the European Center for Foreign Relations, stated, "But the idea of having permanent military bases that can then be used as political ammunition against you and spun up in a kind of disinformation war is maybe not the best way of going about things." Analysts say that France is also aiming to increase its economic foothold in Anglophone African countries like Nigeria. Nigeria and South Africa are already its two biggest commercial partners on the continent. Macron was talking with Nigerian President Bola Tinubu as Chad made the news. (Monika Pronczuk and Sylvie Corbet, December 19, 2024).

The Sahel region is becoming more involved in structured resilience programs like the Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Program. This is a multi-donor trust fund run by the World Bank that aims to improve adaptive social protection systems and make it easier for vulnerable groups to deal with economic and climate shocks. As the Economic Community of West African States approaches its fiftieth anniversary, it is at a critical point in its development that requires major internal changes. These changes include strengthening enforcement mechanisms, giving the organization more financial independence, and shifting its focus from elite-driven priorities to citizen-centered governance. The formation of the Alliance of Sahel States also creates a new way for countries in the region to work together. This could lead to geopolitical fragmentation if

the two groups start to compete with each other more. Instead of making things worse, there is a strong case for ECOWAS and AES to work together in a practical way and only on certain issues that they both care about, like fighting terrorism, integrating trade in the region, and protecting the environment. In this situation, how legitimate each framework is will probably depend less on their political views (democratic governance vs. military-led administration) and more on how well they can produce stability, economic growth, and public welfare. It is very important that the direction of regional governance is set by internal priorities rather than outside forces. This shows that sustainable development in West Africa must be based on policies that are based in the area and leadership that is accountable. New policy directions point to a growing focus on a wider range of foreign relationships, such as more cooperation with China, that are based on mutually advantageous agreements that aim to promote industrialization, modernization of agriculture, and development of infrastructure. These kinds of partnerships are already showing up in projects that encourage local manufacturing, make more land habitable and useful, help major economic sectors adapt to new technologies, and improve resource mapping and commercialization. Looking ahead to 2026, there are cautious hopes for socio-economic improvement in the Sahelian states, even though security problems are still a concern because of instability across borders. In the end, ECOWAS and AES will be judged by how well they can turn their institutional goals into real improvements in governance and people's lives. This is because their effectiveness will depend on the political will, administrative skills, and developmental vision of the states that make them up.

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