

Africa at the Dawn of a New World



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ABSTRACT

This study aims to shed light on the contemporary transformations in Africa's struggle against the neo-colonial system within their historical context. It particularly examines the dynamics behind the current shifts in governance in former French colonial African countries. The process of Africa's colonization and its struggle for independence will be dissected into four sections: the colonial period, the process of political independence, the emergence of neo-colonial activities, and what can be referred to as the Second War of Independence for African nations. Certainly, colonialism stands as one of the darkest chapters in human history. With the rise of capitalism and its innate need to find new markets and resource-rich lands, the previously untapped wealth of the African continent was of strategic importance for colonial powers. In the 1880s, colonial conquests accelerated, and by the early 20th century, nearly all African territories were divided among the colonial powers of the era. The classical colonial period continued until after World War II, with Africa gaining political independence in the 1960s. However, Africa's position on the world stage persisted within a new framework of exploitation through dependency agreements imposed by neo-colonialist states. Resistance to this new form of colonialism that began in the 1960s was often met with occupations, military coups, and bloodshed. In the 21st century, the political and economic balance of forces has shifted against leading imperialist states like the United States and France. Eurasian countries, particularly China, respecting the independence and territorial integrity of nations and proposing a new framework of peaceful cooperation, have begun to exert increasing influence in Africa. This environment has brought the African forces striving for full independence back onto the world stage.

Keywords: Africa, de Gaulle, Non-Aligned Movement, new colonialism, New World.

"China has achieved in twenty years what the West failed to achieve for over four centuries in Africa."

Professor Abdoulaye Wade Former President of Senegal

Introduction

WITH ITS INCREASING POPULATION AND growing economy, Africa will continue to be the focus of the world's attention in the coming years due to its abundant natural resources, including oil, natural gas, gold, uranium, diamonds, copper, and many others. Currently, Africa is home to 1.5 billion people, with 60% of them being young people under the age of 25. According to recent

estimates, it is expected that Africa's population will double to 2.5 billion by 2050 (IMF, 2023). According to Hubert Vedrine, former French Foreign Minister, "since the early 2000s, Africa has been growing at an average rate of 5%, and after 2014, the average growth rate is estimated at 6-7%. As the urban population increases in parallel with the growing population, African countries, in addition to having ample natural resources, represent a colossal market" (Vedrine, 2013:34).

This is why the whole world has its eyes on Africa. Africa, until the end of World War II, was subjected to classical colonialism by countries like England, France, and Belgium. During the Cold War era, it witnessed the neo-colonialism of the United States and France. After the Cold War, Africa faced invasions and interventions by the United States, France, and other imperialist states while trying to protect their presence and interests against emerging powers, such as China, Russia, and Türkiye. However, the rise of the BRICS countries in Africa during the 2000s has triggered significant transformations at the expense of Western hegemony and in favor of multipolarity (Gürkan, 2019a, 2019b).

With a group of colonels taking over the government in Mali, independently of France’s initiative, Mali’s struggle for independence against imperialism initiated a new process.

Despite gaining political independence in the second half of the 20th century, African countries have continued to be economically and militarily dependent on imperialist countries. After the wave of independence movements in the 1960s, Africa is now entering a second era of struggles for liberation. The popular movement that began on February 22, 2019, offered the Algerian Army the opportunity to remove the country from the Western influence it had been under for forty years, and the New-Boumediene cadres started to determine the policies of the new era in the lead of the New-Boumediene cadres. With a group of colonels taking over the government in Mali on August 18, 2020,

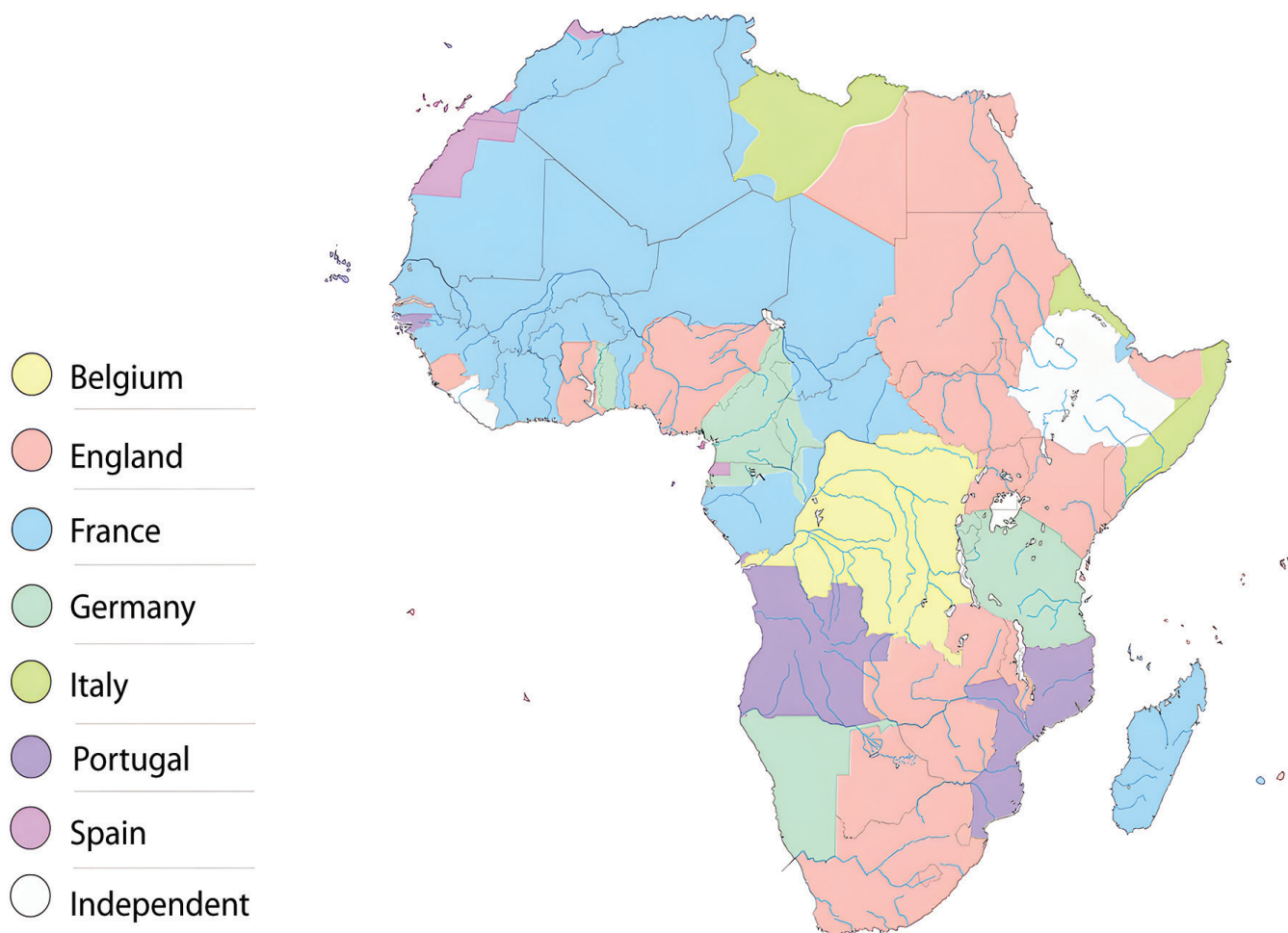
independently of France’s initiative, Mali’s struggle for independence against imperialism initiated a new process. Following Mali, on September 30, 2022, Burkina Faso also followed in Mali’s footsteps, and under the leadership of Captain Ibrahim Traore, a group of young officers dealt a major blow to French imperialism. On July 26, 2023, after Mali and Burkina Faso, Niger also struck a decisive blow against U.S. and French imperialism by forming a people-army alliance and deporting French forces.

Colonial Era in Africa

Colonialism can be defined as “a state’s acquisition of overseas territories beyond its borders through various means, primarily through the use of military force, and establishing dominance over native populations in political, economic, and cultural domains, ultimately plundering all resources of those territories for its own benefit” (Kavas, 2009:394-397).

The process of colonization in Africa dates back to ancient times, reaching as far back as the Phoenicians and Ancient Greeks. However, modern colonialism, in its true sense, began in the 15th century with the Age of Explorations, led by Portugal and Spain. Subsequently, with the involvement of the Dutch, French, and British, Africa became a major battleground for colonization. These European colonial powers initially established colonies in Northwest Africa, mainly for trade purposes, and became particularly involved in slave trade. During the 17th and 18th centuries, European colonialism in Africa was primarily centered around commercial colonies along the western and southern coasts, focusing on slave trade (Şahin, 2018:2).

It was not until the 1870s, with the industrialization of Europe, that increasing production, coupled with the inability to consume the surplus domestically, led to the search for new markets and



At the Berlin Conference, borders were drawn with a ruler. In 1913, almost all of Africa was colonised by Europe (Photo: NDLA, 2024).

resource-rich territories to meet the raw material needs of Europe's growing industries. This quest for new markets and resources through colonial conquests intensified in later periods. In this context, the African continent stood out due to its untapped and abundant resources.

Lenin, in his book *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, provided a comprehensive assessment of imperialism. He quoted Hobson, stating

that between 1884 and 1900, "Britain, with a population of 57 million, acquired 3.7 million square miles; France, with a population of 36.5 million, acquired 3.6 million square miles; Belgium, with a population of 30 million, acquired 900,000 square miles; Portugal, with a population of 9 million, acquired 800,000 square miles of territory," highlighting that "European states achieved significant expansion" (Lenin, 1992: 83-84).

The Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 and the De Facto Occupation of Africa

While free-market capitalism reached its peak and the transition to capitalist-imperialism was underway during the years of 1860-1880, Germany achieved national unification in 1871. During this period, Germany joined the stakeholders of Africa, which had already been divided among Belgium, France, and England. Under the leadership of Germany's founding chancellor, Bismarck, a conference known as the "Berlin Conference" was held from November 15, 1884, to February 26, 1885, attended by "fourteen states: Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, France, Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden-Norway, the Ottoman Empire, and the United States" (Şahin, 2018:3). During this conference, "(...) the principles adopted paved the way for the actual occupation and division of Africa. The decisions made at the conference set the stage for the partition and occupation of Africa, disrupting the continent's traditional structure" (Şahin, 2018:18).

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In Berlin, the colonial powers accepted the principle of "de facto occupation," initiating the division of Africa. By the year 1905, except for Liberia and Ethiopia, all African territories had been occupied by European colonizers. While Britain and France became the largest colonial empires, Portugal, Germany, Spain, Italy, and Belgium followed suit. French colonizers, who had

begun their occupations with Algeria in 1830, continued with Tunisia in 1881. In the early 20th century, they occupied Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea, Mali, Ivory Coast, Benin, Niger, Chad, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, and much of North, West, and Central Africa. They also occupied parts of East Africa, Djibouti on the East African coast, and the island of Madagascar.

Establishment of Colonial Administrations and the Policy of "Civilizing" Indigenous People

By the eve of World War I, the conquest of African territories had been completed. Following Germany's defeat in the war, in West Africa, the former German colonies of Cameroon and Togo became French mandates in 1918. "Military victory continuously altered the colonial map in favor of France. Both old and new colonies sent troops to defend France during the Great War. 172,000 Algerians and 134,000 Africans were sent to European battlefields" (Gosnell, 2020).

Post-war policies aimed to increase dependency on colonial rule. Within this framework, France initiated the creation of colonial administrations, the establishment of schools to promote the French language and culture, and the mobilization of missionaries to "civilize the barbaric African peoples (Roge, 2012:117)." "Binary divisions such as 'black' and 'white,' 'savage' or 'barbaric,' and 'civilized' were deployed as colonial tools to legitimize domination over the colonized" (Roge, 2012:117-130). To facilitate the replacement of Africa's local languages, religions, and traditions with French customs, laws, and values, as well as to ease the cultivation of their lands and the transfer of raw materials to France, the French colonizers had to build railways for transportation, establish the necessary institutions for the flow of money and goods, and implement an administrative system. Therefore, they created an administrative network, a combination



French caricature, 1884-1885, at the Berlin Conference, a document showing how Europe divided Africa among themselves (Caricature: NDLA, 2024).

of private and centralized administration, and established a powerful structure with the Colonial Governor having executive, legislative, and diplomatic powers.

In all the colonies, distinct areas were clearly defined for whites and Africans, arrangements were made for the former to reproduce the same living environment as in metropolitan France, while the latter were relegated to the margins. In short, everything was done to manage, control, and regulate the local population (Tonme, 2023:4).

Political Independence Process in Africa

The attainment of formal political independence by colonies is conceptualized as “Decolonization.” “Decolonization is the ending of control by one state over the people and institutions of another. It can be political and/or cultural. This concept is particularly used for the disintegration of colonial empires established before World War I” (CVCE, 2023).

After World War II, European colonial imperialist countries suffered immense devastation. Their economies were paralyzed, the flow of raw materials and products was disrupted, industrial production came to a halt, and unemployment reached its peak. During this period, the myth of civilizing colonization in France gave way to the myth of peaceful decolonization, and subsequently, developments that would positively influence the independence struggle of the colonies emerged.

The wind of independence began to blow from Asia: In 1945, the countries of Indochina (Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia) initiated their struggle for independence against French colonizers. In 1945, Indonesia, in 1947, India and Pakistan, and in 1948, Myanmar (Burma) declared their independence. The most influential development that shaped this process was the Chinese Revolution and the establishment of the People’s Republic of China under the leadership of Mao Zedong.

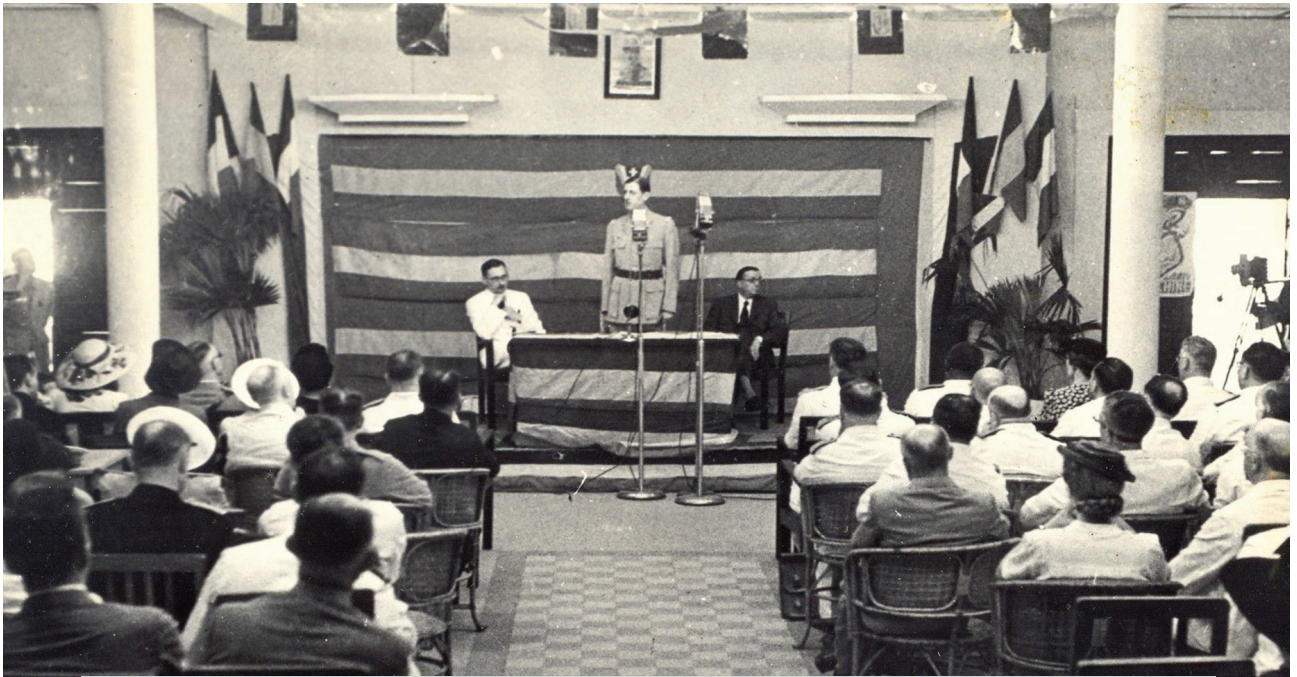
The wind of independence blowing from the East found an echo in Africa, marking the beginning of a new era in the fight against colonialism. On the other hand, the United States, one of the victors of the war, emerged with very little loss and sought global hegemony as the most powerful imperialist state of the time. To achieve this, it aimed to encircle the Soviet Union and control Europe and Third World countries. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was established on April 4, 1949, to achieve this goal. Thus, the Cold War era began, which would last until the 1990s when the Soviet Union collapsed.

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The Bandung Conference held in Indonesia from April 17 to 24, 1955, brought together approximately twenty-nine delegates from African and Asian countries, including Nehru from India, Nkrumah from Ghana, Nasser from Egypt, Sukarno from Indonesia, Modibo Keita from Mali, and Tito from Yugoslavia. The participants adopted a declaration stating that their countries were officially neither with nor against any of the major blocs. In other words, they chose to remain outside the Cold War. They also issued a “Declaration on World Peace and Cooperation,” based on five principles to govern their relations. These five principles included mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence (Tonme, 2023).

The Brazzaville Conference (1944)

In 1940, France was under German occupation, and its administration was divided between the Nazi-collaborating Vichy Government and the resistance movement “Free France” led by General de Gaulle from London. The French colonial empire in Africa was facing the threat of extinction. Almost all colonial governors had taken a pro-Vichy stance. Only Governor Félix Éboué of Chad, along with Cameroon and Congo-Brazzaville (now the Central African Republic), supported the cause of “Free France.” Except for Gabon, by the end of the summer of 1940, nearly the entire French Equatorial Africa (AEF) had joined the Free French Forces. In Congo, massive demonstrations in support of de Gaulle’s “Free France” struggle were taking place. With the support of the colonies, the strength of the Free French Forces increased from 7,000 in July 1940 to 35,000 by the end of August, and on August 29, 1940, General de Gaulle declared that “the war continues throughout the French Empire,” with reference to the colonies. The capital Brazzaville was seen by the General as a “refuge” for French “honor” and “independence” (Ndiaye, 2021). On October 24, 1940, General de Gaulle arrived in Brazzaville, where the organization of the resistance of Free France was to take place, following his call for resistance from London on June 18, 1940. On October 26, he made a radio speech announcing the organization of the French response against the Nazi occupation. “On October 27, Brazzaville, which became the capital of Free France, announced the establishment of a ‘Conseil de Défense de l’Empire’ (Empire Defense Council) and confirmed the determination of Free France to continue its struggle with the support of French Equatorial Africa” (Dedeyan, 2020). This shows how important Africa was in the struggle of France against Nazi occupation. Before de



De Gaulle giving a speech at the Brazzaville Conference (1944). On stage, from left to right, René Pleven, General De Gaulle, Félix Eboué (Photo: Musée Alexandre-Franconie, 2024).*

* This photo is taken from the website of the Alexandre-Franconie Museum - Guyana Regional Collective.

Gaule arrived in Paris on August 24, 1944, the Provisional Government of the French Republic (Gouvernement Provisoire de la République Française-GPRF) was established in Algeria on June 3, 1944. The resistance was managed from three centers until de Gaulle's return to Paris: London, Congo-Brazzaville, and Algeria. At the same time, the French colonies that supported France in the war were boiling, and nationalist demands were increasingly voiced. Debates about the status of the colonies in the international arena had also begun. De Gaulle knew that the Soviet Union opposed colonialism, and the United States also wanted the sovereignty rights of the colonies to be fulfilled. The United States, which had joined the sharing table and saw itself as the savior of Europe, aimed to "condemn colonialism and advocate for the liberation of peoples" (Ndiaye, 2021). Throughout

the war and afterward, De Gaulle remained distant from the United States, and with the idea of taking the lead and not losing France's colonies, he asked Chad Governor Félix Éboué to organize a meeting with all colonial governors. From January 30 to February 8, 1944, the "French Africa Conference" was held in Brazzaville, the capital of AEF, under the auspices of General de Gaulle. "Nineteen governors of French West Africa and representatives of North African countries attended the meeting. No local Africans were invited to the conference. The conference discussed topics such as increasing colonial representation in the Constituent Assembly, establishing representative assemblies consisting of Europeans and natives elected by general vote in each colony, and implementing a policy to educate and encourage native elites" (Bouamama, 2021:74-75).

It became clear at the conference that France did not favor the political organization of the colonies. In his opening speech, General de Gaulle stated, “The results of France’s civilizing efforts in the colonies rule out any idea of autonomy, even in the distant future, as every kind of autonomy is ruled out for any section of the empire, just as it is for other regions where people under our flag do not bring material and spiritual benefits to themselves or rise to the level where they can participate in the management of their own affairs” (Gassama, 2010:169).

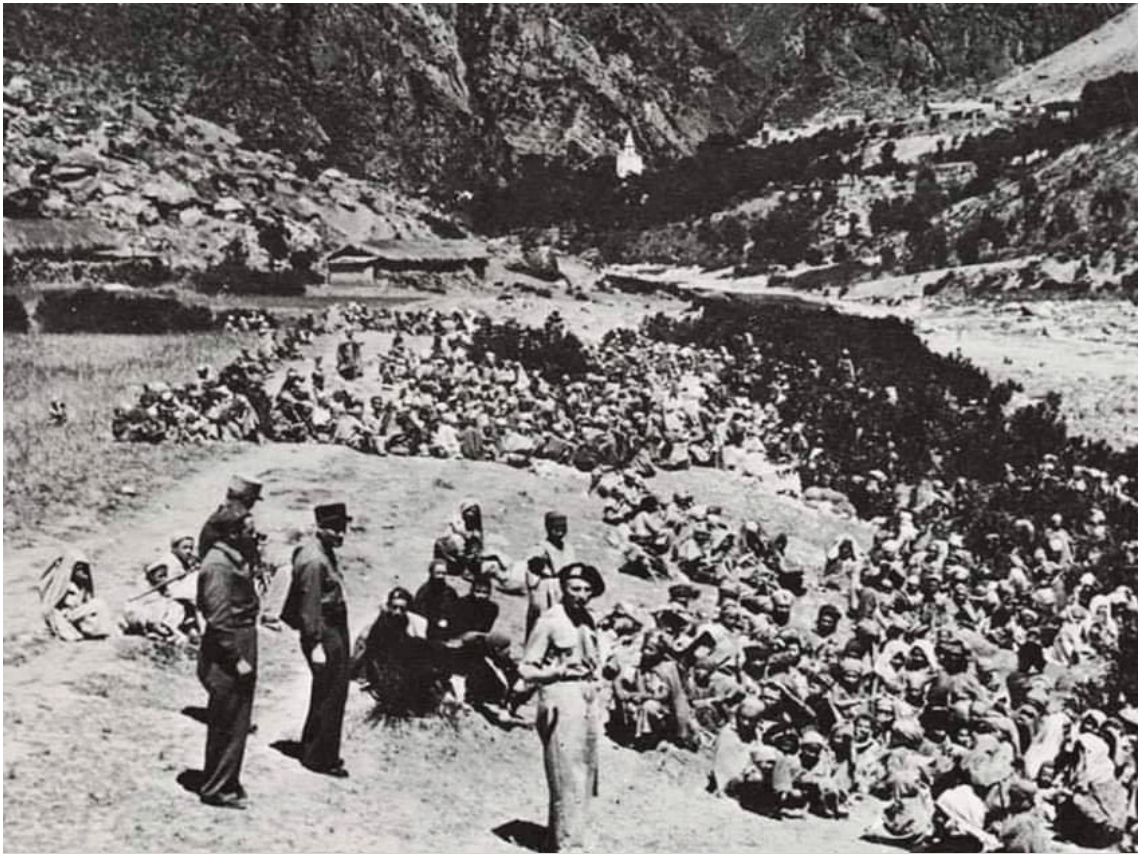
French had started seeking ways to ensure that the colonies remained under France’s sovereignty.

General de Gaulle did not foresee immediate independence for French colonies. He believed that the process towards the independence of the regions would be gradual. With these words, he aimed to reshape France’s colonial policy after the war: “We believe that, especially in terms of developing resources and major communications, the African continent must largely form a whole. However, as in all other regions where people live under our flag, people in French Africa must rise gradually to a level where they can bring material and spiritual benefits to themselves and participate in the management of their own affairs, just like everyone else under our flag. It is France’s duty to make this happen” (Gassama, 2010:170). They had started seeking ways to ensure that the colonies remained under France’s sovereignty. Félix Éboué, the Governor of Chad and the organizer of the conference, advocated for

the creation of a “local bourgeoisie” that would serve France: “By promoting and establishing the authority of local political institutions and local leaders, we can turn them into an elite that serves us, we can create a ‘local bourgeoisie’ consisting of Black and mixed-race French people” (Ndiaye, 2021). They partially succeeded in this, training cadres that served them and gaining political independence in the 1960s, while also facing the emergence of nationalist and revolutionary leaders in Africa who rebelled against French colonial oppression.

The Deadlock of French Colonialism

The decisions of the 1944 Brazzaville Conference, aimed at continuing colonial rule, were met with strong resistance in Africa. On May 8, 1945, the same day the war ended, in the town of Setif in Algeria, demonstrators led by the clandestine Algerian People’s Party shouted “Long live free and independent Algeria” and carried the Algerian national flag, but they were attacked by French colonial police and soldiers. To suppress these uprisings, the French colonialists carried out attacks by land and air, resulting in the killing of 45,000 Algerians. The Provisional Government of de Gaulle was in power at the time. On May 12, de Gaulle sent a telegram to the general governor of Algeria, stating, “Express the sympathies of our government to the families who lost their lives. Publicly declare that France will not tolerate anything that aims to challenge its sovereignty over Algeria. Take the necessary measures” (Taşdelen, 2020:176-177). Not only de Gaulle but also the Social Democrats and the French Communist Party (FCP) supported these massacres (Pervillé, 2012:332).



On 8 May 1945, the occupying French forces in Algeria carried out a terrible genocide in Setif and Guelma. 45,000 Algerians lost their lives (Photo: hawzahnews, 2022).

Until 1958, France, primarily governed by Social Democrats, was in a state of political instability. During this period, France's biggest issue was the war of independence initiated by Algeria in 1954. In 1946, when discussions about a new Constitution arose in the 2nd de Gaulle government, which was formed with the French Communist Party (FCP) and the Socialist Party (SP), de Gaulle resigned on January 20, 1946, when he could not reach an agreement with the FCP and SP. Thus, the new Constitution that de Gaulle opposed was adopted in October 1946, and the Fourth Republic, which would last until October 1958, was estab-

lished. On December 18, 1946, a temporary government was formed under the presidency of Socialist Léon Blum, which would last for two months. According to the new Constitution, on January 16, 1947, the parliament elected the new president of the republic. Socialist Vincent Auriol, supported by the Communists, became the president. Auriol entrusted Paul Ramadier with the task of forming the government. The organization of the Gladio and France's entry into NATO took place during the presidency of Socialist President Auriol and Prime Minister Ramadier, who remained in power until 1951 (Pervillé, 2012; Taşdelen, 2020).

On June 18, 1954, the government was formed by Radical Pierre Mendès France, who appointed François Mitterrand as the Minister of the Interior responsible for the colonies. The government not only faced the Algerian issue but also simmering unrest in the colonies. The independence struggle that began against French colonialists in 1946 had been won by the countries of Indochina. On July 21, 1954, Mendès France, through an agreement signed in Geneva with the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, officially ended French colonialism. Tunisia and Morocco had also revolted against France. On March 2, 1956, Morocco gained independence, followed by Tunisia on March 20, 1956, putting an end to French colonialism (Taşdelen, 2020:177-178).

Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962)

On November 1, 1954, the National Liberation Front of Algeria (Front de Libération Nationale: FLN) initiated a war of independence against France. On the same day, Ahmed Ben Bella announced the establishment of the FLN through a radio channel in Cairo. The National Liberation Army (Armée de Libération Nationale: ALN), which led the actions, revealed its founding program through leaflets distributed in Algeria and called on the Algerian people to join the struggle:

“Colonialism is nothing but a lie when it comes to justice, democracy, and equality... Our brothers who have died for their homeland and we, at the cost of your blood, call you to the struggle for freedom. Organize in the Liberation Front. Allah is with those who fight on the right path, and no force can stop this besides death. Long live the armed liberation. Long live independent Algeria” (Michal, 2012:19-20).

FLN explained its goal of national independence as follows:

“1. To establish a democratic, social, and sovereign Algerian state within the framework of Islamic principles, 2. To respect all basic freedoms without discrimination based on faith or race.”

They presented a three-point negotiation platform to the French government:

“1. Abolish all laws declaring Algeria as French territory and recognize Algerian citizenship, 2. Acknowledge the indivisibility and sovereignty of Algeria and initiate negotiations with representatives of the Algerian people based on this, 3. Release all political prisoners, repeal special laws, and cease searches and pursuits against the combatant forces to establish a climate of trust.”

They added:

“1. Respect will be shown for the economic rights legitimately acquired by the French, their cultural interests, and French families, 2. French residents who wish to remain in Algeria will either retain their original nationality or adopt Algerian citizenship under the laws that will come into effect, 3. Relations between France and Algeria will be determined by a mutual agreement based on interests and equality” (Michal, 2012:20-22).

During the Mendès France government, with François Mitterrand as the Minister of the Interior responsible for the colonies, an effort was made to suppress the uprising with more than 800,000 soldiers, declaring, “Algeria is France, and France will not accept any authority other than itself” (Michal, 2012:39). After the general elections on January 2, 1956, a “Republican Front” government was formed under the presidency of Socialist Guy Mollet, excluding the Communists and de Gaulle supporters. Mitterrand became the Minister of Justice. A Socialist Party member, Robert



1958, soldiers of the National Liberation Army in the Algerian War of Independence
(Photo: Museum of African Art Belgrade, 1958).

Lacoste, was appointed as the general governor of Algeria. Robert Lacoste and General Massu, under his command, unleashed terror with full authority. Algerian patriots were subjected to unimaginable torture, and some were beheaded by the guillotine.

French governments failed to suppress the Algerian resistance. On May 28, 1958, President Coty assigned General de Gaulle, with the support of the army, the task of forming the government. De Gaulle accepted the task. De Gaulle, who went to Algeria on June 4, stated in his spe-

ech, “I understand you. The path you have opened in Algeria is the path of brotherhood. Everyone living in Algeria is French. They have the same rights as those in France” (Caillet, 2018). FLN had taken a clear stance against de Gaulle’s statements, stating that Algerians had not been fighting for four years to become French citizens, and they would not accept any promise other than independence, and that de Gaulle was trying to assimilate them, emphasizing that they had not sacrificed 500,000 martyrs in vain (Ageron, 1982:174).

On September 19, 1958, the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (Gouvernement Provisoire de la Revolution Algerienne-GPRA) was announced in Cairo, with Ferhat Abbas as its president. On September 28, de Gaulle presented a new constitution including a semi-presidential system, which was approved by 80% of the votes in a referendum. The constitution officially came into effect on October 4, marking the beginning of the Fifth Republic, which continues today.

De Gaulle was determined to resolve the Algerian issue. He signaled negotiations with the GPRA, saying, “We have a challenging and bloody Algerian problem to solve. We won’t achieve this by jumping on each other, shouting slogans... We will look at the problem as a great nation. The only valid options are 1. Separation and independence, 2. Assimilation as equals with the French, 3. Algerians choosing their own government

but remaining tied to France in terms of the economy, education, defense, and foreign relations” (Michal, 2012:560). GPRA President Ferhat Abbas responded, “There can be no negotiations until French soldiers withdraw.”

Finally, the negotiations that began in Evian, France on March 18, 1962, resulted in the signing of a Treaty, bringing an end to the eight-year armed struggle. With the amnesty issued, Algerians in captivity regained their freedom, and resistance fighters who had been forced to leave their country returned. An independence referendum was held on July 1. On July 3, France officially recognized Algeria’s independence, and on July 5, Algeria became an independent country.

Ahmed Ben Bella became Algeria’s first President. In 1960, Huari Boumediene, who was the Chief of the Liberation Army, played a significant role in Ben Bella



Huvvari Bumedien was the second President of Algeria from 19 June 1965 to 27 December 1978 (Photo: AfricaSis, 2019).

becoming president and became the Vice President and Minister of Defense. Later on, due to economic difficulties and the unrest in society causing turmoil in the military, a government coup took place on June 19, 1965, under the leadership of Boumediene, toppling Ben Bella. In December 1978, Boumediene, whose health was deteriorating, passed away. (Michal, 2012:870-871).

The Momentum Paving the Way for Political Independence: The 1958 Brazzaville Speech

While preparing for the upcoming referendum on the new constitution scheduled for September 28, 1958, De Gaulle was also attempting to reach an agreement with the National Liberation Front (Front de Libération Nationale: FLN) to resolve the Algerian issue. The post-war realignments, the emerging Western system, and the resistance against colonialism in Asia and Africa had made it clear that colonialism was no longer sustainable. De Gaulle was striving to resolve the colonial issue in favor of France on a constitutional level.

"We will establish a Community in which each region will govern and manage itself, provided that we pool certain areas, such as diplomacy, defense, and currency, which will be in a common fund"

In August 1958, just three months after returning to power, General De Gaulle embarked on a tour of Africa to persuade the people to support his new constitution plan. He visited Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Madagascar,

Senegal, and Algeria.

On August 24, 1958, General De Gaulle delivered a speech to a crowd at the Felix Eboué stadium in Brazzaville, the capital of the Congo. In his speech, he proposed the establishment of a Community in which the French Union would be replaced, and each member state would have the opportunity to be autonomous. General De Gaulle warned that every region that voted "no" in the Constitution referendum on September 28, 1958, could become independent. He stated, "Anyone who desires independence can achieve it immediately. France will not oppose it... We will establish a Community in which each region will govern and manage itself, provided that we pool certain areas, such as diplomacy, defense, and currency, which will be in a common fund" (De Gaulle, 1958).

In this way, De Gaulle offered two options to the African colonies: "To remain part of Metropolitan France and the Overseas Territories (colonies that would remain under French control) and establish a Community where each would have its own free and full government (political independence) while sharing a common pool in certain areas, including defense, foreign affairs, politics, economics, justice, education, and long-distance communication, all under the direction of France.

To become an independent country separate from France: If a specific region voted 'no' in the referendum on September 28, they could immediately accept this path, signifying that they did not want to be part of the proposed Community and wished to go their own way, in isolation, taking their own risks. The Metropolitan France would accept the consequences of this decision, and I guarantee you, it will not oppose it (De Gaulle, 1958)."

Ahmed Sékou Touré

On September 28, 1958, voters in mainland France and overseas territories (colonies) overwhelmingly cast their votes in favor of the new Constitution. Only Guinea, under the leadership of Sékou Touré, chose independence on October 2 by casting a dissenting vote. Subsequently, the Community was established, with the former French West Africa (AOF) and French Equatorial Africa (AEF) regions becoming member republics. This new situation offered several advantages for France, such as no longer requiring France to maintain colonial administration and leaving untouched the tools of exploitation. Access to raw materials and diplomatic harmony were guaranteed. All wrongdoers would

be punished with coups or assassinations, while loyalists would be defended against popular movements (Tobner, 2010:632).

While 14 French colonies agreed to the new colonial system, the only one to oppose it was Guinea, led by Ahmed Sékou Touré. Touré perceived General de Gaulle’s aforementioned Brazzaville speech as “disparaging Africans.” Just one day after the conference, on August 25, 1958, Touré delivered a speech in Conakry, Guinea’s capital, in the presence of General de Gaulle. This speech, which African leaders currently fighting for their Second Independence frequently reference and has made Touré a symbol against colonialism in Africa, is excerpted here:

“The emergence of Africa’s values is hindered not by those who shaped them but by economic and po-



Ahmed Sékou Touré was Guinea's first president from 1958 to 1984 (Photo: AfricaSis, 2018).

litical structures inherited from colonial rule, which are not in harmony with future aspirations. That is why we want to correct these structures fundamentally, not with timid and partial reforms, so that our societies may follow the rising path of constant evolution, continuous progress... We will never and shall never renounce our legitimate and natural right to independence. We intend to exercise this right, while staying bound by, and collaborating in the use of, it for the common wealth, as proposed. We do not confuse the exercise of this right with leaving France. The draft constitution should not be locked into the logic of colonial rule that made us legally French citizens and our territories an integral part of the Indivisible French Republic. We are Africans, and our territories cannot be part of France... The nature, or rather the new nature, of relations between France and its former colonies should be determined without paternalism or deceit. We categorically say NO to any change in the colonial regime or any paternalistic spirit, with the intention of preserving the commitments to be entered into by the new French-African Community in time and space, without any sense of rebellion. We are the determined and conscious participants in the political evolution of Black Africa; this is a basic condition for the total reformation of all colonial achievements for the African peoples and in their interest, not against them” (Touré, 1958).

Guinea, which cast a “no” vote in the referendum, declared its independence on October 2, 1958, under the leadership of Ahmed Sékou Touré. By December 1, 1958, sixty countries had recognized their independence. However, France did not take this kindly. While General de Gaulle appeared to be taking a step towards freedom, dignity, and independence for the peoples under French rule, the reality was quite different. Sékou

Touré recommended to his people that they choose independence over the Community proposed by de Gaulle, which he praised. As a result, Guinea found itself under a severe blockade overnight and faced a series of consecutive plots to eliminate Touré (Tonme, 2023:50).

14 French Colonies Gaining Their Independence

Following the constitutional referendum, in less than two years (by 1960), several French colonies achieved their political independence, including Cameroon, Senegal, Togo, Madagascar, Dahomey, Niger, Upper Volta, Ivory Coast, Chad, Central Africa, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, Mali, and Mauritania.

On January 1, 1960, Cameroon, on April 27, 1960, Togo, and on August 1, 1960, Dahomey (which later became Benin in 1975) declared their independence. On August 3, 1960, Niger, on August 5, 1960, the Upper Volta region, initially part of Ivory Coast and later separated, became independent. Burkina Faso was named during Thomas Sankara’s rule on August 4, 1984. On August 7, 1960, Ivory Coast, on August 11, 1960, Chad, on August 13, 1960, the Central African Republic, on August 15, 1960, Congo Brazzaville, on August 17, 1960, Gabon, on August 20, 1960, Senegal, and on September 22, 1960, the former French Sudan, under the name of the former Mali Empire, gained their independence.

Algeria’s independence in 1962 inspired many other African countries. Armed struggles erupted in other last colonial strongholds: Angola (1961), South Africa (1961), Guinea-Bissau (1963), Congo (1963), Mozambique (1964), and Rhodesia (1966), and they eventually achieved their independence.

This process produced leaders who became symbols in the fight against colonialism and guided nationalist and revolutionary leaders in Africa today: Kwame Nkrumah, the leader of Ghana, the first black African country to declare independence on March 6, 1957, and an advocate of “African socialism.” Ahmed Sékou Touré, who brought Algeria into the camp of “anti-imperialist states” and nationalized the country’s energy resources (oil and natural gas), banks, and major industries, becoming one of the prominent figures in the Non-Aligned Movement. Modibo Keita, the first President of Mali, played a decisive role in the Non-Aligned Movement and suggested the name “Non-Aligned” at the 1961 Belgrade conference attended by President Tito, Nasser, and Nkrumah. Habib Bourguiba, who followed in the footsteps of Atatürk in Tunisia, secularized the country, and leaned towards Nasser’s Arab socialism.

Another example is Thomas Sankara. In the 1970s,

while receiving military training, he became acquainted with Marxism; he read African revolutionaries and Lenin. He was respectful of faith and believers; “When asked which books he would take with him to a deserted island in 1986, he answered: Lenin’s *State and Revolution*, the Bible, and the Quran” (Bouama, 2021: 348). Thomas Sankara gathered a group of officers in an organization called *Rassemblement des officiers communistes (ROC)* consisting of revolutionary soldiers and contributed to the Marxist education of many of them. He was appointed State Minister in charge of information and later Prime Minister on November 7, 1982 (Lepidi, 2020). Thomas Sankara met Fidel Castro at the 7th Non-Aligned Countries Summit in New Delhi on March 7-12, 1983, and was influenced by Castro’s call for the cancellation of Third World countries’ debts at the United Nations General Assembly, which he attended on September 25, 1984. After the General Assembly meeting, he visited Cuba



Thomas Sankara, President of Burkina Faso from 1983 to 1987, was a Burkinabé military captain, Marxist revolutionary, pan-Africanist theorist (Photo: AfricaSis, 2018).

to meet with Castro (Jaffre, 2016). On March 26, 1983, his anti-imperialist speech as prime minister at a rally disturbed the conservative wing of the regime, and he was arrested on May 17, 1983. Supported by left-wing organizations and unions, popular protests forced the government to release him (Bouamama, 2021: 352-353). When he became president after a military coup on August 4, 1983, with the support of the people, he was 35 years old. He claimed to have realized a “Democratic and Popular Revolution” and defined his line as anti-imperialism. The “National Revolution Council” they established started by changing the name of the country from “Upper Volta,” the name during the French colonial period, to “Burkina Faso,” which means “Land of Honest Men” (Bouamama, 2021: 355).

Sankara advocated for African unity and independence against imperialism and neo-colonialism.

He added the phrase “We will overcome” to Che Guevara’s famous “Homeland or Death” quote, which became the country’s slogan (Lepidi, 2020). During his four years in power, the destiny of the country changed. He advocated for African unity and independence against imperialism and neo-colonialism. He supported revolutionary struggles in neighboring countries such as Mali, Ivory Coast, and Togo. This situation particularly disturbed the imperialists, especially France (At that time, François Mitterrand was the President of France, and Jacques Chirac was the Prime Minister). On October 15, 1987, he was overthrown by a coup led by his closest friend Blaise Compaoré and subsequently killed. The role of France in the 1987 military coup and Sankara’s assassination is still a subject of debate today (Lepidi, 2020).

The Era of Neo-Colonialism

Neo-colonialism refers to an imperialist policy adopted by colonial powers towards their former colonies, in which they use various methods of influence and domination to serve their own interests and those of their corporations. Coined by Jean-Paul Sartre in 1956, this term was first used in a speech by Kwame Nkrumah in 1965. The term extends the concept of colonialism from the 16th to the 19th centuries to describe post-colonial relations of domination (Ardant, 1965:837-838).

Neo-colonial powers use excuses to legitimize their military presence, ensuring the security of countries that supposedly gained independence after the 1960s and suppressing those who rebel against the system through counter-insurgency methods. Furthermore, they effectively control countries through financial methods, often leading to indebtedness, and cultural policies (also known as “cultural imperialism”) (Gürcan, 2022). Former colonial states, especially when it comes to natural resources, continue to maintain their presence in the economies of their former colonies. Many foreign companies continue to exploit Africa’s mineral and oil reserves, such as Total, Elf, and Areva.

Although African countries achieved political independence in the second half of the 20th century, their economic and military dependence on imperialist countries persisted. Particularly, France established a new colonial system in Africa. Except for Guinea, the countries outside of Guinea accepted their independence while entering into dependency agreements under the guise of cooperation. Thus, since 1960, Africa’s economic and military dependence on France has continued.



(left to right) Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser, Ethiopian delegate Yilma Deressa, Kojo Botsio of the Gold Coast and Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru at the Bandung Conference (Photo: Picryl, 1955).

French remained the official language and language of education in these countries. France maintained its economic and military ties with former colonies by creating the “Community of French-Speaking Countries” in Africa. In 1945, it introduced the CFA franc (African Financial Cooperation franc) as a currency to perpetuate the colonial system. Fourteen African countries have been using the CFA franc as their currency since 1961. Since 1961, the “national” currency reserves of 14 African countries have been held at the French Central Bank. This situation brings France approximately 400 billion euros annually from Africa (Konate, 2021). French companies continue to exploit minerals such as oil, gold, uranium, and silver, plundering

these countries in the fields of telecommunications, electricity, water, transportation, construction, and health. State leaders who went astray were overthrown and replaced by their collaborators. “In Paris, a real Ministry of Colonies, known as the Cooperation Ministry, managed these natives with zero tolerance for any deviation. Assassinations, kidnappings, torture, disappearances, and manipulations were part of this policy.” (Tonme, 2023:52-53).

Prime Minister Michel Debré clarified the connection between cooperation and independence in a meeting with Gabon’s future President Léon Mba on July 15, 1960, a month before independence was declared: “Independence is given on the condition that the independent state commits to respecting

the cooperation agreements previously signed; two systems are in place simultaneously: independence and cooperation agreements. One cannot exist without the other. These famous cooperation agreements were almost the same for all new states: the CFA franc remained as it was, and France retained its veto power over African currency printing institutions; financial assets remained under the control of the French Treasury; French companies preserved customs privileges, long-term exemptions, and freedom of profit transfer, and they received protection guarantees against nationalization; the presence of the French army was guaranteed in former colonies, etc.” (Bouamama, 2021:176-177).

After World War II, the Atlantic system, led by the United States, also created its own tools to continue military domination and economic exploitation.

After World War II, the Atlantic system, led by the United States, also created its own tools to continue military domination and economic exploitation. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were established together in 1945 following the Bretton Woods Conference (1944), with the aim of creating a new international monetary system, and they began operating in Washington from 1946 onwards. This marked the beginning of the era of the dominance of the U.S. dollar (Gürkan, 2023). These organizations would indebt poor African countries through loans they provided, imposing political, economic, and military demands in return.

Africa's Second Wave of Independence in the New World

In the 2000s, a significant shift in global dynamics began to take place. The dominance of the United States and France, both worldwide and in Africa, was weakening, making way for a new civilization rising from Asia. Economically, China and India, and militarily, Russia, were beginning to surpass the United States and France. Türkiye, which was rapidly ascending in the era of Asia, and showing signs of distancing itself from the Atlantic Front, naturally began to embark on an economic and diplomatic opening in Africa.

The foundation of relations between Asia and Africa was laid during the Bandung Conference held in Bandung, Indonesia, from April 18 to 24, 1955. This conference laid the groundwork for the Non-Aligned Movement. In recent times, Chinese President Xi Jinping, who is also the General Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC), stated the principles of his country's relations with Africa during his speech at the 60th anniversary of the Asia-Africa Summit held in Jakarta, Indonesia, on April 22, 2015: “Sixty years ago, the leaders of 29 countries from Asia and Africa gathered at the Bandung Conference, giving birth to the spirit of Bandung solidarity, cooperation, and brotherhood; they revived national liberation movements that embraced Asia, Africa, and Latin America; they accelerated the global process of decolonization. The Conference played a historical role in the course of international relations by setting forth the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and the Ten Principles of State-to-State Relations, and it developed relations between Asia and Africa and North and South. The Bandung Conference is a cornerstone of solidarity and cooperation among the peoples of Asia and Africa” (Teori, 2016).



Africa and China promote a more just and equitable international order in the framework of win-win cooperation. 6 September 1963. Members of the Kenya African National Union (KANU) delegations were visiting Mao Zedong (Photo: Liu Qingrui, Xinhua, 1963).

President Xi Jinping outlined the principles of his relationship with Africa during his speech at the Asia-Africa Summit in Jakarta as follows: “In the framework of win-win cooperation, we should promote a new type of international relations and foster a fair and equitable international order... We should deepen Asia-Africa solidarity... We should jointly address challenges, bring our cooperation to a higher level, and continuously enhance the qualities that make us good friends, good partners, and good brothers... We should embrace the win-win approach for common development, align our development strategies, enhance infrastructure accessibility, and engage in

result-oriented cooperation in industry, agriculture, human resources development, and other fields, and promote activities such as green energy, economic and e-commerce... While preserving differences, we should create common ground and be open and inclusive... It is imperative to respect the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of all countries and their right to freely choose their social systems” (Teori, 2016).

In China’s relations with Africa, there is no bloodshed, massacre, destruction, or bombing. Chinese companies extract oil in Angola, uranium in Zimbabwe, cobalt in the Congo, and copper in Zambia, while

also building roads to transport goods, and constructing railways connecting Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, Djibouti, and Rwanda. They build government buildings, schools, hospitals, and social facilities in African countries.

Former Senegalese President Professor Abdoulaye Wade commented on China-Africa relations, saying, “China has achieved in twenty years what the West failed to achieve for over four centuries in Africa” (Tonme, 2023:172).

China has unquestionably become Africa’s top trading partner.

The 2000s were a period of rapid development for China’s relations with Africa. In 2007, China surpassed France and became Africa’s top trading partner starting from 2009. Unlike the colonial West, China has been developing its commercial relationships with Africa on the basis of mutual benefit and non-interference in domestic affairs, which has been appealing to African countries. Even Western-leaning heads of state have started turning to China for economic and military cooperation.

Trade between China and Africa reached \$282 billion in 2022, increasing by 11% compared to the previous year. According to Chinese customs officials, exports to Africa increased by 11.2% to \$164.49 billion compared to the previous year. Imports from the African continent also increased by a similar rate, reaching \$117.51 billion. With a total trade volume of \$282 billion, the Africa-China trade relationship, according to the same source, saw Chinese exports to African countries increase by 20% to approximately \$97.8 billion between January 1 and July 31, 2023, compared to the same period in 2022. China has unquestionably become Africa’s top trading partner.

Shanda Tonme, a professor at the International Relations Institute of Cameroon (IRIC), who has authored several reference works on Africa and international relations, describes what China has been doing in Africa as follows: “Every African country has hundreds of undergoing projects. When China is not there, it’s Türkiye and other developing countries. Roads, bridges, entire cities, and private factories were built in a very short time, often financed via advantageous loans... The Ethiopia-Djibouti railway is simply stunning. This transportation and sub-regional integration jewel, which stretches hundreds of kilometers and is built with Chinese financing, has no coastline, connecting a distant country to the sea. It was built in a completely necessary and indisputable modern standard, which nailed Westerners’ heads and revealed their boundaries and failures, as well as their rudimentary plans, self-centeredness, and calculated selfishness” (Tonme, 2023:172-175). China has established Confucius centers in many African countries to teach the new language of international trade. Until 1980, it was rare to hear of an African studying in China, but by 2000, it became a trend, and a real race began to become rich in Eduardo’s science and technology. In this context, the African student community in China is currently one of the largest and most active communities, as well as being the most widespread in the country’s major cities” (Tonme, 2023:178).

The Nearing End of Neo-Colonialism in Africa

In recent years, a wave of rebellions has erupted against the neo-colonialism that has been ongoing in Africa for 60 years. In response to these developments, imperialist powers, particularly France and the United States, in alliance with each other against China in Africa, orchestrated a series of coups and invasions in the 2000s to stop Africa’s shift towards China.

In 2010, in Ivory Coast, they overthrew Laurent Gbagbo, who was keen on developing relations with BRICS countries, especially China. In 2011, France, led by Sarkozy, who played the role of the striking force of U.S. imperialism, attacked Libya and assassinated President Muammar Gaddafi. In 2013, France intervened militarily in Mali and the Central African Republic. In 2019, the United States attempted a coup in Ethiopia. However, they could not achieve the results they aimed for with these efforts. The West has started to lose in Africa, where it had been plundering for its own wealth and prosperity. Military interventions would no longer work. Shanda Tonme, the author of the book “France-Africa: Inevitable Separation,” writes about the direction of development as follows: “A new planetary balance is being established before our eyes, where the center of gravity will shift from the West (Western Europe and North America) to the Eurasian continent (Russia and China). There is an opportunity to seize. Sub-Saharan Africa will be able to break free from French colonial bondage and create win-win partnerships by breaking free from the bonds of colonial history” (Tonme, 2023:15).

With the moderate climate created by the strengthening of leading countries in Eurasia such as China, Russia, and Türkiye in Africa, a resistance and struggle against imperialism has begun in several countries in Africa. The ideas and actions of leaders of the anti-colonial struggle, such as Ahmed Sékou Touré, Kwame Nkrumah, Modibo Keita, and Thomas Sankara, are flourishing once again.

The Second Wave of Independence in Africa: Mali (2020)

On August 18, 2020, a group of young colonels in Mali, led by Assimi Goita, seized power, marking a new phase in Mali’s independence struggle against imperialism. The Malian people supported this move

by the army’s revolutionary officers against imperialism and neo-colonialism. These events highlighted the army’s crucial role in defending and securing the nation’s independence and safety with the support of the people.

Goita’s administration is determined to eradicate all remnants of French neo-colonialism.

Goita’s administration is determined to eradicate all remnants of French neo-colonialism. On January 31, 2022, the French Ambassador was asked to leave Mali, followed by a decision for all French troops to immediately exit the country. Consequently, in 2022, France’s Barkhane Operation in Mali ended, and the Malian government terminated military agreements that formed the legal basis for the Serval and Barkhane Operations and the Takuba Task Force. With 5100 French troops in Mali at that time, all activities of French and European soldiers on Malian soil were declared illegal (Harding, 2022).

In 2013, under the pretext of combating jihadist terrorist groups in Northern Mali, the French military established its presence through the Serval and later Barkhane Operations. After the expulsion of French Barkhane forces and the departure of UN peacekeepers, the Malian army began successful operations against terrorist groups. By November, the Kidal region, controlled for a decade by separatist and jihadist armed groups, was liberated by the Malian army with Russian allies. Mali’s struggle and victory against the new colonialism of the USA and France set an example.

Cameroonian author Shanda Tonme, in his book “France-Africa: The Inevitable Separation,” describes the ignited spirit of independence in Mali: “Mali, even



Captain Ibrahim Traore seized power in Burkina Faso in 2022 and became the world's youngest leader (Photo: ISS, 2022).

more than the Central African Republic, has become a beacon for a different Africa rising against French neo-colonial pressure. The reality is that the ruling soldiers speak a direct language without diplomatic concerns and act with a clear awareness of responding to the masses' expectations. Their leader, Assimi Goita, combines determination and humility in a dialectical exercise where he respectfully references Thomas Sankara, offers himself as a sacrificial lamb if needed, and sends a strong message of resolve to French leaders. If in 1958, with Ahmed Sékou Touré's resonant 'no' to General de Gaulle on behalf of the French community, Africa was not yet ready to raise its voice and give a definitive, public, resolute, and popular response to the arrogant, racist, and condescending colonizer, today the situation is different. From Bangui to Bamako, young state leaders, backed by a more equipped, informed, and alert national public opinion, are initiating resistance" (Tonme, 2023:196-197).

Burkina Faso (2022)

On September 30, 2022, Burkina Faso followed the path of Mali. A group of young officers led by Captain Ibrahim Traore seized power. Like Mali, they ended the mission of the French Special Forces in their country, which had been operating against the so-called jihadist terror through the "Sabre" operation for 12 years. They expelled the French Ambassador and annulled the military agreement signed between the two countries in 1961, striking a significant blow against French imperialism. Traoré is compared to Thomas Sankara, Burkina Faso's revolutionary leader from 1983 to 1987, also known as the "African Che Guevara." La voix du Niger newspaper reported, "The rise to power of Colonel Ibrahim Traore has already sparked enthusiasm among many Burkinabé, who have lived through the glorious days of the Sankarist revolution, seeing him as a new Thomas Sankara returning to the game" (Rfi, 2022).

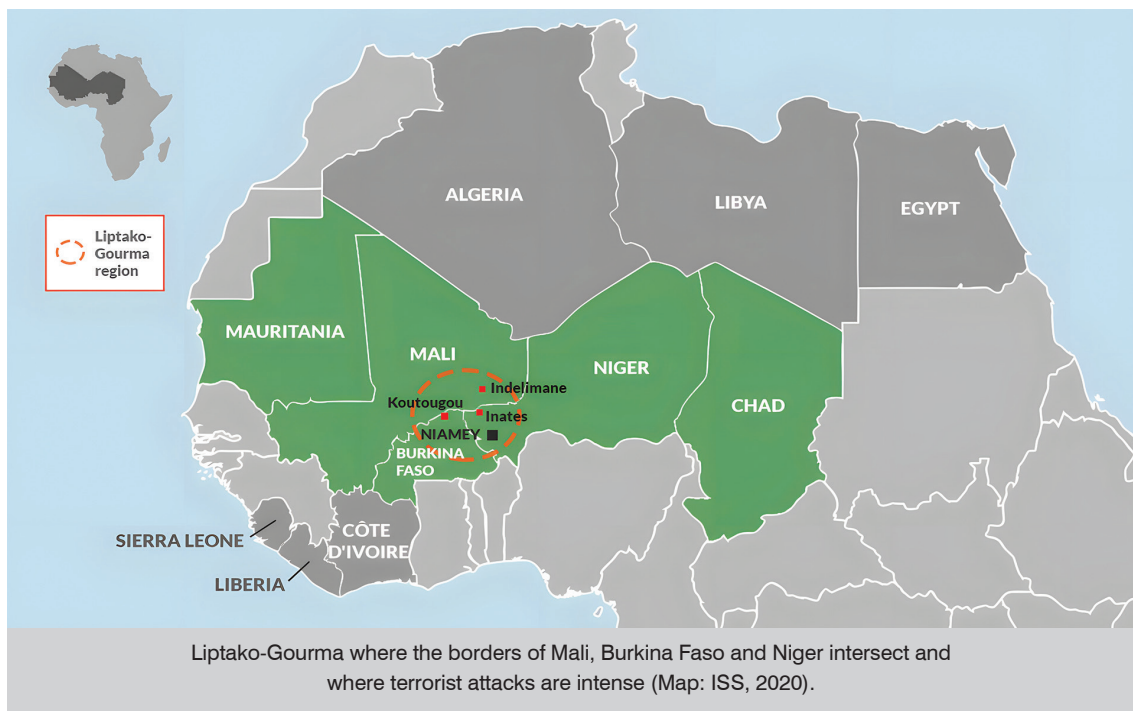
Burkina Faso’s young and charismatic leader, Ibrahim Traoré, made a striking speech at the Russia-Africa Summit in St. Petersburg on July 27-28, 2023: “A slave who cannot rebel does not deserve mercy.” He spoke about Africa suffering from hunger due to the West’s neo-imperialist policies and being condemned when people try to take their fate into their own hands. Traoré, questioning the paradox of Africa’s richness and its poverty, said, “My generation doesn’t understand this: How can Africa, so rich, be the poorest continent today? And why are African leaders traveling the world begging?” He called for struggle, proclaiming, “Victory to our people. Either the homeland or death” (Lefaso, 2023).

Niger (2023)

Following Mali and Burkina Faso, Niger also struck a blow against U.S. and French imperialism through the unity of its army and people. On July 26, a mi-

litary uprising led by Abdurrahman Tiani resulted in the expulsion of French forces in the country. Since France’s military intervention in Mali in 2013 (Operation Serval), which later expanded to Burkina Faso and Niger with Operation Barkhane, 5100 French soldiers had been stationed in the region. After Mali and Burkina Faso expelled French troops, France had relocated its soldiers to Niger. Finally, the remaining 1500 French military personnel in Niger were also expelled by the new regime (Pierson, 2023). Control over uranium, along with oil and other resources, was one of the reasons for France’s continued economic, political, and military dominance over its former colonies after their independence. Niger is the world’s seventh-largest producer of uranium.

Despite only contributing about 4% of global production, it is a significant supplier. According to the EU’s nuclear agency Euratom, in 2022, 25% of the European Union’s uranium imports came from Niger. For France, Niger accounted for 15-17% of its



imports over the past decade (BBC, 2023), making uranium strategically important for France.

“Yesterday Mali, the Central African Republic, Burkina Faso, and today Niger rejected France, its forces, and its companies”

The new regime’s tensions with France are causing concern in France, which derives 70% of its electricity from nuclear energy. French senators sent a letter to President Emmanuel Macron criticizing the Paris administration’s recent policies in Africa, which have turned into anti-French sentiment. The letter stated, “Yesterday Mali, the Central African Republic, Burkina Faso, and today Niger rejected France, its forces, and its companies” (Rfi, 2023).

The French media extensively covered France’s defeat and deadlock in Africa: *Le Point* (August 1, 2023) headlined “Emmanuel Macron at an impasse in the Sahel” and added, “The coup in Niger dealt another blow to him. The coup that the President of Niger fell victim to on July 27 nailed the last coffin in Macron’s policy in the south of the Sahara.”

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), spurred by France and the U.S., threatened the Nigerien revolutionaries with military intervention. ECOWAS had adopted the same stance against Mali, imposing sanctions and closing borders with neighboring countries. These were not just sanctions but a complete blockade. Mali did not submit to France or its follower ECOWAS. Mali and Burkina Faso declared, “An attack on Niger is an attack on us and is a cause for war.” Algeria, Russia, and Türkiye raised their voices against military intervention.

Africa Moving Towards Economic, Military, and Diplomatic Unity

Developments are increasingly unfavorable to Western imperialists and colonizers. Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger’s Second War of Independence against French imperialism is clearing all remnants of new colonialism, strengthening solidarity and unity among them.

The leaders of Niger, Mali, and Burkina-Faso met in Mali’s capital, Bamako, on September 16, 2023, to sign an agreement defending their countries’ sovereignty and territorial integrity against threats, both foreign and domestic. The agreement, named after the Liptako-Gourma region where the borders of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger converge and which has been a hotspot for intense terrorist attacks, states, “Any attack on the sovereignty or territorial integrity of one will be considered an attack on all.” With this agreement, the three countries announced the formation of the Sahel States Alliance (Alliance des Etats du Sahel-AES). While their goals include security and combating Western-backed terrorism, they also decided to develop a common language and work together in diplomacy, defense, and economic areas. The 17-article agreement includes “improving the free movement of goods and people within the AES, establishing a food security system, developing a common industrialization strategy for the Alliance States, and projects in energy, agriculture, and water...” (Victoria, 2023). In foreign relations, the three countries have canceled all agreements with the European Union, including those in the military-security area. They withdrew from the G5 Sahel organization, initially formed by regional countries but later controlled by France. They annulled decades-long tax agreements with France. As stated in Article 16 of the agreement, they plan to join the BRICS. Niger’s military leader, General Abdurrahman Tiani, announced on national television on December 10, 2023, that Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso are seeking a political and monetary alliance (Agenceecofin, 2023).


The first article of the Liptako-Gourma Agreement includes the establishment of an investment bank and the creation of a common currency, the “Sahel,” aimed at escaping the West African currency CFA franc, seen as a remnant of French colonial administration. This step symbolizes Africa’s struggle for economic independence, with Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger reclaiming control of their destinies (El Kanabi, 2023).

Conclusion

For centuries, African countries have been plundered by colonial imperialists and have been under the hegemony of the West for the last 60 years. Parties, movements, and other actors in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, which defend their countries’ independence against U.S. and French imperialism, are rising to power through the unity of the “Army-Nation,” expelling colonial institutions and troops from their territories.

Today, in Africa’s political, economic, and military equations, there are rising Eurasian powers like China, Russia, India, and Türkiye, and on the other side, declining Atlantic powers like the U.S. and French imperialists. The colonial era, which began with Portugal and Spain during the Age of Discovery in the 15th century, continued with the slave trade in the 17th and 18th centuries, accelerated with colonial conquests after the 1880s, the rise of monopoly capitalism, and ended with the division of almost all African territories (except Liberia and Ethiopia) among European colonizers after the “Berlin Conference” led by German Chancellor Bismarck from November 15, 1884, to February 26, 1885, lasted until World War II. After the 1960s, the process towards independence from colonialism, conceptualized as “Decolonization,” began. This process was marked by France’s famous leader de Gaulle. With the changing post-war world conditions and the rise of the anti-colonial struggle, French imperialism agreed to political independence for its colonies with

new methods of dependency to maintain their economic and military dominance, thus beginning the era of neo-colonialism. While French colonizers continued to plunder Africa, they encountered new nationalist and revolutionary leaders brought forth by history.

In the 2000s, however, global balances shifted. Eurasian countries like China, Russia, India, and Türkiye began significant economic, military, and cultural cooperation in Africa, weakening the influence of imperialists like the U.S. and France. The independence struggle against French imperialism won by Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger in the 2020s marked the beginning of a second era of independence. The formation of the Sahel States Alliance (AES) by the three countries with the Liptako-Gourma Agreement, the liberation of Mali’s Kidal region from terrorist organizations, the successful joint fight against terrorism, and the concrete efforts by AES to break free from the French colonial currency CFA, will significantly impact other countries in Africa’s Sahel region (Mauritania, Chad) and southern neighbors (Benin, Togo, Ivory Coast, Guinea). Western-backed terrorism is one of the region’s most pressing common problems. Other significant issues include drought, hunger, water and electricity, unemployment, and education. The unification of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger to overcome shared challenges will resonate in the region. Article 17 of the Liptako-Gourma Agreement facilitates the inclusion of any West African country that wants to escape France’s new colonial policy and achieve sovereignty like the AES states. “Togo has already expressed its intention to join the Liptako-Gourma coalition, and other countries may follow. The name ‘Sahel’, referring to the region, enhances its appeal to other countries, bolstering its influence and economic potential. Ultimately, the Sahel represents much more than a mere currency change; it symbolizes Africa’s struggle for economic independence and the reclaiming of control over their destinies by Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger” (El Kanabi, 2023). 

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