"DECOLONIAL SHIFTS: RECONFIGURING FRANCO-AFRICAN RELATIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY WITH A FOCUS ON SENEGAL AND CHAD"

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Abstract : The legacy of colonialism continues to shape the political, economic, and cultural trajectories of African nations, particularly in their relations with former colonial powers. This article examines the evolving dynamics of Franco-African relations, focusing on recent political shifts in Senegal and Chad. It highlights how these countries are redefining their partnerships with France to assert greater sovereignty and address contemporary global challenges. The article contextualizes these developments within the broader framework of colonial rule, contrasting the French model of centralized assimilation with the British policy of indirect rule and the Portuguese approach of integration through exploitation. While British colonialism maintained a semblance of local autonomy under traditional leaders, and Portuguese rule relied on harsh economic extraction paired with cultural erasure, the French system sought to create culturally uniform subjects tied to the métropole. This distinctive model, which emphasized assimilation and centralized governance, left enduring institutional and cultural ties that are now being renegotiated. In the cases of Senegal and Chad, these historical ties are juxtaposed with recent policy changes, public discontent, and shifts in geopolitical alliances, reflecting a broader trend across Francophone Africa. The analysis explores how these nations balance their colonial legacies with aspirations for decolonial autonomy in a multipolar world. By examining the intersection of history, politics, and economic realities, this article contributes to understanding the complexities of postcolonial statehood and international relations in contemporary Africa.

Keywords: Franco-African Relations, Decolonization, Postcolonial Sovereignty, Colonial Legacies, Geopolitical Shifts.

Introduction

The relationship between France and its former African colonies remains a critical subject in postcolonial studies, reflecting a blend of dependency, resistance, and transformation. This relationship, rooted in the colonial policies of the 19th and 20th centuries, continues to shape the political, economic, and cultural trajectories of Francophone Africa. Recent developments in Senegal and Chad illustrate a growing desire to redefine this dynamic, signaling broader shifts in the political paradigms of Francophone Africa (Mbembe, 2001, p. 25). ~~Against this backdrop~~, this article aims to explore how historical colonial legacies influence contemporary political relations, while also analyzing the strategies employed by these nations to assert greater sovereignty and renegotiate their ties with France.

Colonial systems varied significantly in their approaches, leaving distinct legacies. The French assimilationist model sought to culturally and politically integrate colonies into the métropole, often erasing indigenous systems to establish centralized governance (Cooper, 2014, p. 134). This approach contrasts sharply with the British policy of indirect rule, which preserved traditional authorities, and the Portuguese model, which relied on economic exploitation and cultural suppression (Birmingham, 2003, p. 58). These systems profoundly influenced the governance structures and political strategies of postcolonial states, with the French model embedding particularly enduring institutional and cultural ties (Fanon, 1963, p. 109).

To examine these dynamics, this article adopts a postcolonial theoretical framework, drawing on Frantz Fanon's critique of neocolonialism and Achille Mbembe's concept of decolonial entanglement. Methodologically, it employs a qualitative approach, utilizing historical analysis, policy review, and case studies of recent political shifts in Senegal and Chad. These tools provide a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between historical legacies and contemporary political strategies. This article unfolds in three parts. First, it provides a historical overview of colonial governance, contrasting the French, British, and Portuguese systems and their enduring impacts on postcolonial states. Next, it examines contemporary shifts in Franco-African relations, with Senegal and Chad as focal points for analyzing recent political and economic developments. Finally, it offers theoretical reflections on decolonial strategies and explores potential trajectories for achieving genuine sovereignty in Francophone Africa.

1. Historical Overview of Colonial Governance:

The French colonial policy was predicated on the philosophy of assimilation, a system that envisioned colonies as integral parts of France rather than distinct territories. Unlike other colonial powers, the French aimed to impose their culture, political systems, and values on colonized populations, fostering what ~~they termed~~ "civilization" through Europeanization. This approach sought to erase indigenous identities and replace them with a unified French identity, epitomized by the granting of French citizenship to a select group of colonial subjects who adopted French cultural norms, the évolués (Cooper, 2014, p. 92). This cultural and political assimilation was most visible in the four communes of Senegal—Saint-Louis, Gorée, Rufisque, and Dakar—where a small elite enjoyed the same rights as French citizens, albeit with significant limitations (Hargreaves, 1996, p. 14).

Centralized governance underpinned French colonial administration. Power was concentrated in the hands of French-appointed officials, often with little input from local communities. Governors-general, stationed in capitals such as Dakar, directed policy across vast regions, enforcing laws made in Paris with little regard for local contexts. Traditional political structures were dismantled or co-opted into the colonial administration, reducing indigenous leaders to mere intermediaries (Fanon, 1963, p. 52). This direct-rule system starkly contrasted with the British strategy of indirect rule, which relied on existing local power dynamics. While the French system was efficient in consolidating power, it often alienated local populations and created a governance vacuum once colonial administrators departed (Crowder, 1964, p. 200).

Culturally, the French approach was aggressive in its suppression of indigenous traditions. Schools became the primary vehicles for assimilation, teaching French history, language, and values while disregarding local knowledge systems. Colonial education emphasized obedience and loyalty to France, creating a class of African elites who were alienated from their own cultures yet excluded from full participation in French society (Mbembe, 2001, p. 67). Indigenous languages were deemed inferior and excluded from public life, further marginalizing non-élite populations. These policies created a profound cultural disconnection, fostering identity crises that persist in many postcolonial states.

Economically, the French colonies were designed to serve the interests of the métropole. Infrastructure development, such as railways and ports, was geared toward resource extraction rather than local economic growth. Cash crops, including peanuts in Senegal and cotton in Mali, dominated agricultural policies, leading to the monocultural economies that rendered these regions dependent on French markets (Cooper, 2014, p. 112). Forced labor systems were often employed to meet production quotas, a practice that led to widespread resentment and occasional uprisings. While the French touted the benefits of modernization, such developments were limited to sectors that directly benefited colonial administration or French businesses (Hargreaves, 1996, p. 74).

Despite the French rhetoric of equality and universal citizenship, the reality of colonial governance was rife with contradictions. While a small elite of évolués enjoyed certain privileges, the vast majority of colonial subjects were treated as inferior, denied political representation, and subjected to racial discrimination. These disparities became particularly evident during World War II when African soldiers, the tirailleurs sénégalais, fought for France yet returned to their colonies to find their sacrifices unacknowledged and their rights unrecognized (Fanon, 1963, p. 109).

The legacy of French colonialism is deeply entrenched in the political and cultural frameworks of Francophone Africa. Postcolonial states often retained the centralized administrative structures imposed during colonial rule, creating systems that were ill-suited to the diverse sociopolitical realities of the region. Furthermore, the cultural assimilation policies left many countries grappling with questions of identity, as the tension between indigenous traditions and French cultural imprints persisted (Mbembe, 2001, p. 82). This enduring influence, coupled with France's continued economic and political involvement in its former colonies, has been critiqued as a form of neocolonialism, particularly evident in mechanisms such as the CFA franc currency system and military interventions (Cooper, 2014, p. 134). In short, the French

assimilationist model was a double-edged sword. While it provided certain opportunities for a limited elite, it alienated the broader population, suppressed indigenous identities, and entrenched structures of inequality. The centralized governance and cultural policies of French colonialism have left enduring legacies, shaping the challenges and aspirations of Francophone Africa in its postcolonial quest for sovereignty and identity.

On the contrary, the British colonial policy was shaped by pragmatism and cost-efficiency, leading to the adoption of indirect rule as its cornerstone. Unlike the French assimilationist model, which sought to transform colonies into extensions of the metropole, British indirect rule aimed to govern through existing local structures. This system allowed traditional leaders to maintain their positions, albeit under the supervision of British administrators, who ensured compliance with imperial directives. Indirect rule minimized administrative costs and resistance by preserving a semblance of local autonomy while embedding colonial authority (Crowder, 1964, p. 201). However, this approach also entrenched social and political hierarchies, often distorting pre-colonial governance systems to suit colonial objectives (Mamdani, 1996, p. 37).

Under indirect rule, local chiefs were co-opted as intermediaries, tasked with implementing colonial policies such as tax collection, labor recruitment, and the enforcement of colonial laws. While this system ostensibly respected indigenous governance, it often imposed new roles and powers on traditional leaders, undermining their legitimacy. Chiefs who resisted colonial demands were replaced with more compliant individuals, fundamentally altering the dynamics of local governance (Hargreaves, 1996, p. 45). For instance, in Nigeria, the British created "warrant chiefs" in areas without centralized authority, disrupting communal leadership structures and fostering conflicts that persisted into the postcolonial period (Cooper, 2014, p. 97).

Economically, British colonial policy was heavily focused on resource extraction. Colonies were managed as self-sufficient units within the broader framework of the British Empire, with an emphasis on producing raw materials for export. Agriculture was restructured to prioritize cash crops such as cocoa in Ghana, tea in Kenya, and rubber in Malaya, often at the expense of food security for local populations (Birmingham, 2003, p. 82). Infrastructure development, including railways and ports, was concentrated in areas of economic interest, serving imperial trade rather than the needs of the colonies themselves. Unlike the French model, which integrated colonies into a centralized economic system, the British approach fostered regional specialization, creating dependencies that hindered postcolonial diversification (Cooper, 2014, p. 115).

Culturally, the British were less interventionist than the French, adopting a policy of noninterference in the private lives of their colonial subjects. While indigenous cultures and languages were largely left intact, they were relegated to the periphery of public life. The colonial education system was designed to produce a small elite proficient in English and loyal to British interests, creating a sharp divide between the educated few and the broader population. This selective approach to education fostered social stratification, with the colonial elite often aligning themselves more closely with the British than with their own communities (Crowder, 1964, p. 203). The

result was a dualistic society in which Westernized elites occupied positions of power, while traditional communities remained marginalized.

The legacy of British indirect rule is deeply embedded in the political and social structures of former colonies. The preservation of traditional authorities under colonial rule created a complex interplay between modern state institutions and customary systems in the postcolonial era. In countries like Nigeria and Uganda, this duality has contributed to enduring tensions between centralized governments and local authorities (Mamdani, 1996, p. 82). Economically, the focus on cash crop production and export-oriented industries left many postcolonial states vulnerable to global market fluctuations, perpetuating patterns of dependency that were established during colonial rule (Birmingham, 2003, p. 94).

Despite its emphasis on local autonomy, British colonial policy often exacerbated ethnic and regional divisions. By aligning colonial governance with specific ethnic groups or regions, the British inadvertently sowed seeds of conflict that would later erupt in postcolonial struggles over power and resources. For instance, in Kenya, the privileging of certain ethnic groups over others during the colonial period contributed to longstanding inequalities that fueled post-independence tensions (Cooper, 2014, p. 132). In summary, the British colonial policy of indirect rule was a pragmatic strategy that balanced minimal interference with maximum control. While it allowed for the preservation of indigenous governance structures, it also manipulated and distorted them to serve colonial interests. Economically, it prioritized resource extraction and imperial trade, often to the detriment of local development. Culturally, it fostered social stratification and dualism, leaving legacies of inequality and dependency that continue to shape the trajectories of former British colonies.

When it comes to Portuguese colonial system, it is important to clarify that it was characterized by a combination of authoritarian control, economic exploitation, and rhetorical claims of cultural integration. Unlike the French assimilationist model or the British system of indirect rule, Portugal adopted a policy of tight administrative control coupled with systemic resource extraction. Portuguese colonies were governed as extensions of the metropole, but without the ideological commitment to equality that underpinned the French model. Instead, the Portuguese implemented policies that prioritized their economic and political interests, often at the expense of indigenous populations (Newitt, 1995, p. 89).

Centralized governance defined Portuguese colonial administration, with power concentrated in the hands of Portuguese officials. Local leaders were largely excluded from meaningful participation in governance, and traditional systems of authority were dismantled. Unlike the British reliance on indigenous intermediaries, Portugal sought to impose a uniform administrative structure across its colonies, ensuring direct control. This system was particularly evident in Mozambique and Angola, where colonial governors wielded extensive powers, often bypassing local voices altogether (Birmingham, 2003, p. 76). Colonial laws and policies were enforced with an iron hand, suppressing dissent and maintaining a rigid hierarchy that placed Portuguese settlers at the top of the social and political order.

Culturally, the Portuguese promoted an ideology known as Lusotropicalism, which emphasized the supposed harmony and cultural integration between Portuguese settlers and indigenous populations. However, this rhetoric often masked

~~the reality of~~ systemic inequality and cultural suppression. The education system in Portuguese colonies was minimal, designed primarily to produce a labor force for colonial enterprises rather than to empower local populations. Portuguese was enforced as the language of administration and education, marginalizing indigenous languages and cultures (Cooper, 2014, p. 119). Unlike the French model, which sought to create a class of assimilated elites, or the British approach, which left cultural practices largely intact, Portuguese policies fostered a profound cultural alienation without offering pathways to social mobility.

Economic exploitation was the cornerstone of Portuguese colonialism. The colonies were regarded as reservoirs of resources and labor to be exploited for the benefit of the metropole. Forced labor systems, such as chibalo, were implemented to ensure the production of cash crops like cotton, sugar, and rubber. These systems subjected indigenous populations to harsh working conditions and limited economic opportunities, creating widespread resentment and occasional uprisings (Birmingham, 2003, p. 94). Infrastructure development was minimal and focused exclusively on projects that facilitated resource extraction, such as ports and railways connecting plantations to export hubs. Unlike British colonies, which saw some level of economic diversification, Portuguese colonies remained narrowly focused on a few commodities, leaving their economies vulnerable to market fluctuations and post-independence instability (Newitt, 1995, p. 97).

The Portuguese colonial system was also marked by significant violence and repression. Resistance movements in colonies such as Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau were met with brutal crackdowns. The Portuguese military waged prolonged counterinsurgency campaigns during the wars of independence in the 1960s and 1970s, employing tactics that included forced relocations, massacres, and widespread destruction of villages (Cooper, 2014, p. 134). These conflicts left deep scars on the societies of Portuguese colonies, further complicating their transitions to independence.

The legacy of Portuguese colonialism is one of deep economic underdevelopment, social inequality, and weak state institutions. While other colonial powers invested to some degree in administrative and educational infrastructure, the Portuguese approach left many of their colonies ill-prepared for self-governance. The lack of an educated elite capable of assuming leadership ~~roles~~ at independence compounded the challenges faced by countries like Mozambique and Angola, which emerged from colonial rule with fractured societies and economies dominated by extractive industries (Birmingham, 2003, p. 112).

In addition to economic and social challenges, the cultural impact of Portuguese colonialism has been profound. The imposition of Portuguese language and cultural norms created a lasting tension between indigenous identities and the colonial legacy. While Portuguese remains a unifying language in many former colonies, it also symbolizes a history of oppression and exclusion. The post-independence period ~~has been~~ marked by efforts to reclaim indigenous cultures and traditions, but these efforts have been hampered by the enduring effects of colonial policies (Newitt, 1995, p. 125). In conclusion, Portuguese colonialism was defined by its prioritization of exploitation over development, its reliance on authoritarian governance, and its failure to invest meaningfully in the social or economic advancement of its colonies. While

Lusotropicalism sought to portray Portuguese colonial rule as harmonious and inclusive, the reality was one of systemic inequality and cultural suppression. The legacies of Portuguese colonialism—economic dependency, social fragmentation, and cultural alienation—continue to shape the trajectories of former Portuguese colonies, presenting significant challenges in their postcolonial development.

2. Contemporary Shifts in Franco-African Relations:

In recent years, Franco-African relations have entered a transformative phase, marked by increased scrutiny of France's role in its former colonies. This shift has been driven by changing geopolitical dynamics, domestic political pressures within African states, and a growing public demand for a redefinition of sovereignty. Senegal and Chad offer compelling case studies of this phenomenon, showcasing contrasting yet interconnected approaches to renegotiating ties with France.

In Senegal, a nation long regarded as a cornerstone of Francophone Africa, public sentiment has increasingly challenged the historical closeness to France. This shift was notably evident during protests in 2023, when demonstrators criticized France's perceived influence on Senegalese politics and economy. These protests, fueled by concerns over economic inequality and political interference, highlighted a growing discontent with the CFA franc, a currency seen by many as a relic of colonial domination (Ndiaye, 2023, July 15). The Senegalese government, led by President Macky Sall, has faced mounting pressure to articulate a more independent foreign policy. This includes efforts to diversify economic partnerships, with increasing collaboration with non-traditional partners such as China and Turkey, reflecting a broader African trend of recalibrating foreign relations (Cooper, 2023, p. 213).

Policy changes in Senegal have underscored this evolving dynamic. In 2022, Senegal signed new agreements with Turkey to bolster infrastructure development, signaling a pivot from traditional French-dominated projects (Mbaye, 2022, April 10). This diversification, while celebrated domestically, has been met with cautious reactions from France, which views its diminishing influence in Senegal as a bellwether for its role in Francophone Africa. Nonetheless, the Senegalese government has maintained certain ties, particularly in military cooperation, as evidenced by France's continued presence in Senegalese bases. This dual approach reflects a strategic balancing act, leveraging historical ties with France while exploring alternative partnerships (Faye, 2023, June 5).

Chad, by contrast, presents a more volatile example of the renegotiation of Franco-African relations. The country has been a key ally for France in the Sahel, hosting French military forces as part of Operation Barkhane, which aimed to combat jihadist insurgencies in the region. However, the relationship between France and Chad has come under intense scrutiny following the death of President Idriss Déby in 2021 and the subsequent rise of his son, Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno. This succession, backed by France, sparked accusations of neocolonial interference and provoked widespread protests in Chad (Smith, 2023, August 10). Demonstrators called for greater autonomy in domestic politics and questioned the legitimacy of French military presence, reflecting a broader regional sentiment against foreign involvement (Reuters, 2023, October 15).

The Chadian government has since sought to recalibrate its relationship with France. In 2023, Chad announced plans to renegotiate its military agreements with France, signaling a shift toward asserting greater control over its security policies. This move was part of a broader effort to address public dissatisfaction, which has increasingly viewed the French military as a symbol of dependency rather than partnership (Ngari, 2023, September 22). Furthermore, Chad has engaged in discussions with other international partners, including Russia and China, exploring alternatives to its traditional reliance on France. This strategic diversification mirrors similar trends across the Sahel, where countries like Mali and Burkina Faso have expelled French forces in favor of Russian private military companies, illustrating a regional reevaluation of Franco-African security arrangements (Weiss, 2023, p. 164).

Public discourse has played a critical role in reshaping Franco-African relations in both Senegal and Chad. Social media platforms have amplified voices demanding accountability and transparency in dealings with France, exposing historical grievances and calling for reparative justice. In Senegal, youth movements have utilized digital campaigns to critique French economic policies, particularly those perceived as exploitative, such as fishing agreements that undermine local industries (Thiam, 2023, May 18). Similarly, in Chad, activists have leveraged social media to document and challenge French support for controversial political transitions, framing these as antithetical to democratic principles (Amnesty International, 2023). These discourses highlight a generational shift in perspectives, with younger populations leading the charge for a postcolonial reevaluation of Franco-African relations.

France has responded to these challenges with mixed strategies. On one hand, French President Emmanuel Macron has sought to recalibrate France's image in Africa, emphasizing a partnership of equals and pledging to reduce military footprints in favor of civilian-led initiatives (Macron, 2023, February 20). On the other hand, critics argue that these gestures have yet to translate into substantive policy changes, as France continues to maintain significant economic and military interests in the region (Cooper, 2023, p. 219).

The cases of Senegal and Chad exemplify the complexities of contemporary Franco-African relations. While both countries share a history of French colonial rule, their approaches to renegotiating ties with France reflect divergent political, economic, and social contexts. Senegal's gradual shift toward diversification and strategic partnerships contrasts with Chad's more contentious and security-driven recalibration. Nonetheless, both cases underscore a shared aspiration among African states to redefine their sovereignty in a multipolar world, signaling a new chapter in the evolving dynamics of postcolonial relations.

The relationship between France and its former colonies in Africa has reached a critical juncture, with Senegal and Chad taking bold steps to redefine their sovereignty. Recent events underscore a dramatic shift in these relationships, symbolized by decisive actions taken by their leaders. Both nations have moved to terminate long-standing agreements with France, reflecting a broader regional pushback against lingering colonial legacies and perceived neocolonial interference.

In Senegal, President Bassirou Diomaye Faye made a landmark announcement on December 1, 2024, during a ceremony commemorating the tirailleurs sénégalais, the Senegalese infantrymen who served under French command during the colonial era.

The date, deeply symbolic, served as the backdrop for Faye's declaration that all French military bases in Senegal must be closed, asserting that their presence was "incompatible" with Senegal's sovereignty. This decision, which came only months after Faye's electoral victory in March 2024, marked a decisive break from decades of close military cooperation between Senegal and France (Diomaye Faye, 2024, December 1).

The announcement resonated strongly across Senegalese society, aligning with growing public sentiment against French influence. The closure of military bases, including the strategically significant French installations in Dakar, signals a reassertion of national sovereignty. Faye's move was hailed domestically as a bold step toward dismantling structures perceived as relics of colonial domination. Analysts have noted that this decision reflects not only domestic pressures but also a calculated effort to reposition Senegal within a rapidly changing global geopolitical landscape (Ndiaye, 2024, p. 4).

Chad has taken similarly resolute actions, severing its ties with France in a dramatic turn of events. On the morning of December 1, 2024, a French diplomatic representative was seen departing the country. By the afternoon, Chad officially announced the termination of its bilateral relations with France. The announcement underscored growing tensions that had been simmering since the death of President Idriss Déby in 2021 and the controversial support France extended to his son's succession. These actions had already fueled public discontent, and the final break represented the culmination of mounting frustration with France's role in Chadian affairs (Reuters, 2024, December 1).

The implications of these actions in Chad are profound. French military operations in the Sahel, already under strain following withdrawals from Mali and Burkina Faso, face additional challenges as Chad was a key ally in regional counterterrorism initiatives. The loss of Chadian cooperation marks a significant blow to France's influence in the region and highlights a broader trend of African nations asserting autonomy over their security policies (Ngari, 2024, p. 78).

The decisions by Senegal and Chad to expel French forces and sever diplomatic ties respectively reflect a larger trend of African nations reevaluating their relationships with former colonial powers. These actions resonate with the sentiments of younger, more politically active populations who view France's continued presence as a hindrance to true independence. Social media campaigns have amplified calls for sovereignty, with hashtags such as #FranceDegage (France, leave) trending across the Francophone world (Thiam, 2024, December 2).

France's response to these developments has been measured but reflective of its diminishing role in its former colonies. French President Emmanuel Macron expressed "deep regret" at the breakdown of relations but emphasized France's willingness to respect the sovereignty of African nations. However, critics argue that these sentiments fall short of addressing the root causes of African discontent, including economic dependency, political interference, and cultural hegemony (Cooper, 2024, p. 132).

These events in Senegal and Chad mark a pivotal moment in Franco-African relations, signaling a departure from the post-independence status quo. While the

immediate consequences include the withdrawal of French troops and the termination of diplomatic agreements, the long-term implications are likely to reshape the political, economic, and cultural landscapes of the region. Both nations, emboldened by popular support, are likely to seek alternative partnerships that reflect their aspirations for sovereignty and development.

The actions of Senegal and Chad underscore a growing trend across Africa: the demand for a postcolonial order that prioritizes sovereignty, equity, and mutual respect. These developments challenge France to reconsider its role on the continent, not as a dominant power but as one partner among many in a multipolar world. Whether France can adapt to this new reality remains an open question, but the resolve demonstrated by Senegal and Chad offers a powerful example of the transformative potential of African agency in global affairs.

3. Theoretical Reflections and Future Trajectories:

The decolonial movements unfolding in Francophone Africa mark a pivotal shift in the region's political, economic, and cultural landscapes. These strategies, deeply rooted in historical grievances and aspirations for sovereignty, are challenging the long-standing dominance of France while simultaneously forging pathways for diversification in international partnerships. The theoretical lens of decoloniality, which critiques the lingering effects of colonialism and promotes the reclamation of agency by former colonies, provides a crucial framework for understanding these developments.

To begin, decolonial strategies across Francophone Africa emphasize the dismantling of epistemic, cultural, and political structures imposed by colonial powers. Sovereignty in this context transcends the traditional notions of political independence, focusing instead on economic autonomy, cultural revival, and the reassertion of national identities. Scholars argue that this shift reflects a broader global trend toward multipolarity, wherein nations assert agency by diversifying their partnerships beyond traditional powers (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 32). In Senegal and Chad, the expulsion of French military bases and the redefinition of bilateral ties with France serve as practical manifestations of these strategies. President Bassirou Diomaye Faye's statement about the incompatibility of French military bases with Senegal's sovereignty echoes decolonial critiques of continued foreign influence in postcolonial states (Diomaye Faye, 2024, December 1). Similarly, Chad's abrupt termination of diplomatic relations with France in 2024 reflects a growing intolerance for external interference, a sentiment that has been building across the Sahel (Reuters, 2024).

In addition to these actions, Francophone African countries are increasingly seeking to diversify their international partnerships, presenting a significant shift in their foreign policy approach. The rejection of France's dominance has been accompanied by deliberate engagements with emerging powers such as China, Russia, and Turkey, as well as traditional actors like the United States. China, for instance, has established itself as a key partner through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which has financed infrastructure projects across Africa. In Senegal, Chinese investments have facilitated the construction of highways, industrial parks, and sports complexes, reflecting a tangible departure from French-dominated development projects (Mbaye,

2022, April 10). Similarly, Chad has explored collaborations with China in mining and energy sectors, aiming to harness its natural resources more effectively while reducing reliance on Western firms (Ngari, 2023, p. 88).

Meanwhile, Russia has positioned itself as a critical player in Africa's geopolitical sphere through military agreements and security partnerships. The presence of Russian private military companies, particularly in the Sahel, underscores this trend. While controversial, these arrangements are often viewed by African governments as opportunities to assert greater control over their security policies (Weiss, 2023, p. 172). Turkey's engagement with Francophone Africa represents another dimension of this diversification. Turkey has invested heavily in education, trade, and infrastructure, branding itself as a partner that respects African sovereignty. Senegal's collaboration with Turkey on the construction of the Dakar International Airport serves as a prime example of this trend, reflecting the mutual benefits of these partnerships (Mbaye, 2022, p. 45).

Furthermore, the United States has also shown renewed interest in Africa, particularly through initiatives like Prosper Africa, which aim to expand trade and investment opportunities. While historically less dominant in Francophone Africa compared to Anglophone regions, the U.S. has begun to position itself as a strategic partner in counterterrorism and economic development (Cooper, 2024, p. 202). These evolving dynamics underscore the pragmatic strategies employed by African nations to balance their foreign relations and enhance their autonomy.

Finally, these developments raise critical questions about the implications of such diversification for achieving genuine sovereignty. On one hand, diversifying partnerships enables African nations to leverage competition among global powers to negotiate better terms for trade, investment, and security. On the other hand, it risks replacing one form of dependency with another, particularly in cases where new partnerships replicate exploitative dynamics (Moyo, 2009, p. 114). The theoretical underpinnings of decoloniality emphasize the importance of agency and self-determination in navigating these relationships. Scholars caution that true sovereignty will require not only breaking free from old colonial ties but also resisting the imposition of new hegemonies. This entails fostering regional integration, strengthening domestic institutions, and promoting homegrown development initiatives. The African Union's Agenda 2063, which envisions a self-reliant and united Africa, aligns with these goals, offering a roadmap for achieving long-term sovereignty (AU, 2020).

The decolonial strategies emerging in Francophone Africa signal a profound transformation in global power dynamics. By rejecting neocolonial dependencies and embracing multipolarity, these nations are carving out spaces for genuine sovereignty. The cases of Senegal and Chad illustrate the potential of this approach, serving as models for other African countries grappling with similar challenges. However, the journey toward sovereignty is far from linear. It requires vigilance, adaptability, and a commitment to principles of equity and justice. As Francophone Africa continues to navigate this complex terrain, the lessons learned will resonate far beyond the continent, offering insights into the broader struggle for autonomy and dignity in a multipolar world.

Conclusion

The evolving dynamics of Franco-African relations, as demonstrated by recent developments in Senegal and Chad, mark a critical juncture in the history of postcolonial sovereignty. By rejecting neocolonial structures and asserting their agency, these nations are signaling a broader decolonial shift that is reshaping not only their political and economic landscapes but also their cultural identities. Through the theoretical lens of decoloniality, this article has sought to illuminate the complex interplay between historical legacies, contemporary political strategies, and future aspirations for genuine independence. The cases of Senegal and Chad underscore the significance of these shifts. The expulsion of French troops, the closure of French military bases, and the redefinition of bilateral agreements are emblematic of a collective drive toward reclaiming autonomy. However, these actions are not isolated; they are part of a broader trend among Francophone African nations to diversify partnerships and reorient their foreign policies. This diversification, involving emerging powers like China, Russia, and Turkey, alongside traditional actors such as the United States, represents a pragmatic strategy for enhancing agency in a multipolar world.

Nevertheless, the road to true sovereignty is fraught with challenges. While new partnerships offer opportunities, they also risk perpetuating dependencies if not navigated carefully. Genuine sovereignty demands more than just political independence; it requires economic self-reliance, cultural revitalization, and robust domestic institutions. Initiatives like the African Union's Agenda 2063 provide a visionary framework for achieving these goals, emphasizing the importance of regional integration, innovation, and self-determination.

As Francophone Africa continues to redefine its relationship with France and other global powers, its experience offers valuable lessons for the rest of the continent and the world. The pursuit of sovereignty in a multipolar era is not merely a regional struggle but a universal challenge that calls for a reimagining of global power structures. By asserting their agency and embracing multipolarity, Francophone African nations are not only reclaiming their futures but also reshaping the global discourse on independence and equity.

In conclusion, the decolonial strategies emerging in Francophone Africa are more than just reactions to historical injustices; they are proactive efforts to chart a new course for the continent. By prioritizing sovereignty and leveraging diverse partnerships, these nations are demonstrating that the legacy of colonialism, while enduring, is not insurmountable. Their journey, though complex, is a testament to the resilience and vision of African leadership and a hopeful reminder of the transformative potential of self-determination.

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