CHALLENGES TO STATE SOVEREIGNTY UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW AND THE TRAJECTORY OF ASSET RECOVERY IN FRANCOPHONE AFRICA: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF MILITARY INCURSION INTO AFRICAN POLITICS*

Abstract
This paper examines the neocolonial dynamics of France's exploitation of natural resources in Francophone West Africa, with a focus on Côte d'Ivoire and Mali. It argues that France's actions constitute a breach of international obligations regarding permanent sovereignty over natural resources. Through a critical analysis of historical and contemporary evidence, this study reveals the mechanisms of French neocolonialism, including the CFA franc monetary zone, extractive industries, and politico-military influence. The paper explores the impact of these dynamics on the economic development and sovereignty of Côte d'Ivoire and Mali, highlighting the need for asset recovery and return trajectories. It examines the international legal framework governing permanent sovereignty over natural resources, including relevant UN resolutions and customary international law. This research contributes to ongoing debates on neocolonialism, resource extraction, and international law, offering insights into the complexities of Francophone West Africa's relationships with France. The findings have implications for policy and practice, informing efforts to promote African economic development, sovereignty, and self-determination.

Keywords: Sovereignty, International Law, Neocolonialism, Africa, Asset Recovery

1. Introduction

The world colonialism is a name which was developed and took her sit in most countries that got their independence in the 50s and 60 in African and Asian countries.[1]This article shall be examining different definitions by some writers in international law discourse. According to J. G. Starke[2] International Law may be defined as that body of law which is composed for its greater part of the principles and rules of conduct which states feel themselves bound to observe, and therefore, do commonly observe in their relations with each other. Hugo Grotius as the Father of International Law: Hugo Grotius reacted to the destruction of thirty years war between 1618-1648 by advancing a rival solution to the problem of war. In 1625, Grotius authored *De jure bellis ac pacis* (Law of War and Peace) which made a great impact on European affairs at the period. It encourages international cooperation, peace and a more humane treatment of people. The work of Hugo was said to be significant because it provided a guide to the operations of this new system of sovereign states and serve as bedrock of operations in the spheres of international Law. The relationship between international law and sovereignty in the context of French Francophone West Africa is complex and multifaceted. Francophone West African countries have formal sovereignty, but France influence has continued to limits their ability to exercise full control over their economic and political systems. This simply means the grant of independence is bedraggled in terms sovereignty of state. A writer once stated in his book during the rush for grant of impendence by the francophone west African Countries in the following manner:[3]

> It so happens that the fault is your fault.' Men come and go along a corridor you have built for them, where you have provided no bench on which they can rest, where you have crystallized a lot of scarecrows that viciously smack them in the face, and hurt their cheeks, their chests, their hearts. Where they find no room where you leave them no room where there is absolutely no room for them and you dare tell me it doesn't concern you that it's no fault of yours!

The above quotation by presents a graphic pictorial decoration of what the colonial slave drivers has turned their colonized countries in recent times in terms of economic deprivation. The argument is that international law recognizes the sovereignty of states, but it also allows for international cooperation and agreements that can limit sovereignty.[4] In most parts of French-speaking African countries, the CFA franc zone is a monetary system that ties Francophone countries of Africa to the apron strings of France. This system has been criticized for limiting the economic sovereignty of these countries. One may therefore question the essence of sovereignty of independent states under neocolonialism. France influence in Africa has been majorly criticized for neocolonialism, where a powerful nation exerts control over weaker nations through economic, political, and cultural inferno.[5] The process of creating an independent state may be seen in the above dimension as a mixture of fact involving the establishment of particular factual conditional compliance handed down by the colonial masters that must be complied by the extant relevant rules of the colonized countries. The acceptance of statehood was laid down in the Montevideo Convention,[6]

***By Daniel Obida IDIBIA, PhD,** Senior Lecturer, Department of Public Law, College of Law, Caleb University, Lagos State, Email: danielobida3@gmail.com

[1] M. Brodowicz 'Negative Effects of Colonialism in Africa Cause and Effect Essay'(2024)<Available at https://aithor.com/essay-examples/negative-effects-of-colonialism-in-africa-cause-and-effect-essay>accessed on 1 August, 2025.

[2] An Introduction to International Law, (1947) [London: Butterworth & Co., Bell Yard, Temple Bar.

[3] F. Fanon 'Toward The African Revolution (Political Essays), Grove Press, New York (1967)<Available at https://monoskop.org/images/0/05/Fanon_Frantz_Toward_the_African_Revolution_1967.pdf>accessed on 24 March 2025.

[4] Malcom Shaw 'States in International Law (4th Edn.) (1997) Cambridge University Press.

[5] C. Chansa et al. French colonialism and neocolonialism in Africa: A comprehensive analysis, p.2.(2024) >Available at wwwwjarr.co.in/sites/default/files/WJARR-2024-2832.pdf>accessed on 24 May 2025.

[6] A Montenegro Convention (1933)<Available at https://www.google.com/search?q=what+are+the+criteria+laid+down+for+statehood+in+the+Montenegro+convention&rlz=1C1GCEU_enNG1160NG1160&oq=what+are+the+criteria+laid+down+for+statehood+in+the+Montenegro+convention&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOdIBCDE1NzVqMGo3qAIIsAIB8QUtkfGY_scxi_EFLZHxmP7HMYs&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>accessed on 22 May 2025.Article 1 sets out the criteria for statehood: The state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications: (a) a permanent population; (b) a defined territory; (c) government; and (d) capacity to enter into relations with the other states.

which provided that a state must possess a permanent population, a defined territory, a government, and the capacity to conduct international relations. The concrete need for a permanent population and a defined territory is clear, but it need be noted that those concerning Albania after World War I and Israel in the period of 1948 did not preclude statehood. In 1960 for instance, the Congo and Angola in 1995 were embroiled in a various civil war and this may seem to have eroded the effective government criterion on their part. However, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina were also recognized as new states by much of the international community in 1992, though at the time neither of them was able to exercise any effective control over significant parts of their territory. Although independence is required, it needs not be more than formal independence. Frantz Fanon's[7] work, particularly 'Toward the African Revolution' and 'The Wretched of the Earth,' discusses the African revolution as a process of liberation from colonialism and neocolonialism. Fanon argues that colonialism is not just a physical force but also a psychological one that distorts the past and future of the colonized people. He advocates for a violent approach to oppose colonization, but also emphasizes the importance of mental liberation and national consciousness. Harping further on the discussion which Mr. Fanon has philosophized years back, which is the rejection of colonialism and all its forms, including neocolonialism, which he sees as a continuation of colonialism by other means which is presently operating in French-speaking West African Countries. The principle of sovereignty equally means the right of the need for national consciousness and self-determination in African countries over their natural resources, psychological liberation of the independent states. It simply means right of permanence over a country's natural resources as provided under the United Nations' Charter.

Decolonization in French colonialism and neocolonialism in Africa was a complex and multifaceted process, marked by both political independence and continued economic subjugation. The continued domination and control over the natural resources and holding on to key industries by vicious neocolonialism is the bane of under-development in franca Afrique especially in West Africa after independence. France continued to exert significant influence over its former colonies through a network of political, economic, and military arrangements, a phenomenon often referred to as '*Françafrique'* Neocolonialism emerged and has continued to submerge African nations who struggled to break free from the grip of strange bed fellows of the economic dominance of France. France has neglected, refused to recognised the right to permanent sovereignty over natural resources of the Francafrique for the past centuries as the world watched in dismay and yet silent over the retained and control over key industries, natural resources, and political structures through cooperation agreements and financial dependencies.[8] Over half a century ago, what was not widely known is that in former French and Portuguese colonies, France was able to retain a significant degree of control over the economics and politics through a neocolonial system dubbed *la Françafrique*.[9] It is argued by this writer that it is highly noticeable that under this system, the independent country lack the economic power, the currency of governance which lies on the economic power of any country is taken away. The running of the state is dictated and directed to a one-sided commercial contract as seen by French companies in Cote d'Ivoire. When and independent country cannot be allowed the management of her own natural resources, there is bound to be revolution especially where puppets are installed as democratic leaders. This will always stifled growth and dis- satisfaction which will eventually lead to in contentment of leadership which may metamorphose to rebellion in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger in African countries.

2. UN Resolution on Permanent Sovereignty of National Resources

Historically, Resolution 1803, among other things, stated that permanent sovereignty over natural resources must be exercised in the interest of 'national development and well-being of the people of the concerned state; it simply means issues concerning exploration, national development, disposition of resources as well as capital importation shall all be governed by the sovereign country. This is why many French-speaking governments in West Africa are now openly rebelling against France in order to review the current impacts. Resolution 1803 (XVII) provides that States and international organizations shall strictly and conscientiously respect the sovereignty of peoples and nations over their natural wealth and resources in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles contained in the resolution.[10] This arrangement is a quid pro quo for the French 'guarantee' of convertibility. The accords stipulate that foreign exchange reserves must exceed money in circulation by a margin of 20 per cent. The final pillar of the CFA franc is the principle of free capital transfer within the francafriqe zone. The present coup d'état in some Francophone countries in Africa may be possibly interpreted in the lens of Fanon's work as a protest against neocolonialism; which Fanon argued was a continuation of colonialism by other means. This includes a national consciousness which reflect a desire for national realization and self-determination, which Fanon saw as essential for African liberation.

In modern context, it is more complex to describe with multiple factors at play, including economic instability, security concerns, and external interference. There may be other different motivations behind the coups as it may be argued that it is not to be taken as solely driven by a desire for liberation or national consciousness, but also, personal or factional interests. Fanon saw this type of revolution years back but his work provides a valuable insight into the dynamics of colonialism and liberation, the current coup d'état in Francophone Africa is a complex phenomenon that requires a typical understanding of the specific context and motivations in these countries. Before this coup d'état in these countries, the world had watched this form of sovereignty over the years and kept mute on the type of independence granted the francophone countries where their sovereignty is hinged on their imperial masters directly from France. Over the years, Francophone African countries face challenges in asserting their sovereignty due to France's historical and ongoing influence. This paper seeks to investigate whether the

[7] Supra note….
[8] Ibid.
[9] E. Belinda et al. 'French Neocolonialism in Africa: Historical Overview and Summary of Current Events'(2023) American Journal of Economic and Sociology<Available at https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/ajes.12493>accessed on 24 May 2025.
[10] UN Resolution 1803.

overstretched plunder of the natural resources of French-speaking West Africa necessitated that in the spirit of nationalism, the people need to take the bull by the horns to liberate their nations and take control of the management of their natural resources.

3. Challenges of African Francophone Countries

The Francophone countries of Africa in today's generation are aware of the continued neocolonialism and the subjugation of their country's economy in the hands of foreigners. Thus, speaking on August 11, 2015 during the 55th anniversary of the independence of Chad, President Idriss Deby declared, 'we must have the courage to say there is a cord preventing development in Africa that must be severed.'[11] The 'cord' he was referring to is now over 85 years old. It is known by the acronym 'CFA franc. Francophone African countries face challenges in asserting their sovereignty due to France's historical and ongoing influence which undermine 'self determination' of the people and the right of the people to determine their own political, economic and social systems. The principle that all states are equal and have equal sovereignty, the recognition of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states.[12] Recalling the UN resolutions 523 (VI) of 12 January 1952 and Resolution 626 (VII) of 21 December 1952, taken into consideration the General Assembly (GA) 1314 (XIII) of 12 December 1958,[13] through which the Commission on Permanent Sovereignty over Natural Resources was established given the instruction to conduct a full survey of the status of permanent sovereignty over natural wealth and resources. This is the first time the thoughts of assimilating the basic constituent of the right to self-determination was being considered with recommendations.[14] When we consider the meaning scope surveying the contours of sovereignty, the debates are extensively and exceedingly in continuum such that it has been subjected to an imprecise definition. Sovereignty does not wear strange mask which makes it difficult to understand and recognize. There may be four main characteristics basically.[15] The first of the four is the power of a state to exercise supreme authority over all persons and things within its territory, legislate on any issue within the state.[16] Furthermore, sovereignty also consists of the capability and ability of the state to regulate its own affairs such as movement across its borders.[17] The notorious recognition that the territorial integrity of a state is inviolable such as to secure independence.[18] Definite territory defines boundaries that protect one state from the intervention of others. Generally, this is the legal identity of the state in international laws, equality of status with other states and the claim to be acting solely as the official agent of the entity called state in international relations on behalf of the society. Another area and the final one is that the state can and should be free to make its own foreign policy choices.[19] Speaking the on sovereignty, are Francophone African states really free to make their own decisions when their currency is tied to the apron strings of the French? Was the present generation of the Francophone people that entered into an agreement of having their money in France? The agreement signed by the forefathers of the French-

[11]N'dongo, S.S Head, Research and Policy for the Africa Region/International Development Economic Associates<Available at https://www.linkedin.com/in/dr-ndongo-samba-sylla-528b0b155/?originalSubdomain=sn>asecessed on 29 May, 2025.

[12] UN resolutions 523 (VI) of 12 January 1952

[13]UNHR. General Assembly Resolutions. (1952, 1958)<Available at https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/general-assembly-resolution-1803-xvii-14-december-1962-permanent>Accessed on 24 May 2025. Noting that the creation and strengthening of the inalienable sovereignty of States over their natural wealth and resources reinforces their economic independence,

Desiring that there should be further consideration by the United Nations of the subject of permanent sovereignty over natural resources in the spirit of international co-operation in the field of economic development, particularly that of the developing countries, Declares that: i) The right of peoples and nations to permanent sovereignty over their natural wealth and resources must be exercised in the interest of their national development and of the well-being of the people of the State concerned. ii) The exploration, development and disposition of such resources, as well as the import of the foreign capital required for these purposes, should be in conformity with the rules and conditions which the peoples and nations freely consider to be necessary or desirable with regard to the authorization, restriction or prohibition of such activities. iii) In cases where authorization is granted, the capital imported and the earnings on that capital shall be governed by the terms thereof, by the national legislation in force, and by international law. The profits derived must be shared in the proportions freely agreed upon, in each case, between the investors and the recipient State, due care being taken to ensure that there is no impairment, for any reason, of that State's sovereignty over its natural wealth and resources. iv) Nationalization, expropriation or requisitioning shall be based on grounds or reasons of public utility, security or the national interest which are recognized as overriding purely individual or private interests, both domestic and foreign. In such cases the owner shall be paid appropriate compensation, in accordance with the rules in force in the State taking such measures in the exercise of its sovereignty and in accordance with international law. In any case where the question of compensation gives rise to a controversy, the national jurisdiction of the State taking such measures shall be exhausted. However, upon agreement by sovereign States and other parties concerned, settlement of the dispute should be made through arbitration or international adjudication. v) The free and beneficial exercise of the sovereignty of peoples and nations over their natural resources must be furthered by the mutual respect of States based on their sovereign equality. vi) international co-operation for the economic development of developing countries, whether in the form of public or private capital investments, exchange of goods and services, technical assistance, or exchange of scientific information, shall be such as to further their independent national development and shall be based upon respect for their sovereignty over their natural wealth and resources. vii) Violation of the rights of peoples and nations to sovereignty over their natural wealth and resources is contrary to the spirit and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and hinders the development of international co-operation and the maintenance of peace. viii) foreign investment agreements freely entered into by or between sovereign States shall be observed in good faith; States and international organizations shall strictly and conscientiously respect the sovereignty of peoples and nations over their natural wealth and resources in accordance with the Charter and the principles set forth in the present.

[14] The aim of these recommendations was to strengthened and decide further the conduct of the full survey of the status of the permanent sovereignty of peoples and nations over their natural wealth and resources. It was also given that due regard should be paid to the rights and duties of States under international law and to the importance of encouraging international co-operation in the economic development of developing countries.

[15]Jackson 'Sovereignty – modern: a new approach to an outdated concept', 97 *American Journal of International Law* (2003), 782–802, at p. 786.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

speaking countries of Africa is now more than three decades. In privity of contract, a third party to an agreement is a stranger who can neither carry out any obligation nor takes the benefit of such agreement. Reasoning from the foregoing, it is therefore strange that agreement entered by the forefathers of the present generation of the French-speaking Africa should be binding on the present generation who were not party to such agreement.

The term permanent sovereignty over natural resources supposedly is a right accruing to peoples, which should and ought to be read as giving people the basis on which to demand greater participation in the formulation of development policies and to make contributions on issues relating to exploitation of natural resources. The meaning of sovereignty over natural resources in the Francophone West Africa is missing because of the heavily presence of neocolonialism. It is given that any right that people may claim must have a legal basis and be defensible.[20] As Crawford points out, if the phrase 'right of peoples' is to have any independent meaning, it must confer rights on peoples against their own governments.[21] One cannot agree more with Duruigbo that, 'when resources belong to peoples it is not only limited to peoples today, but also includes peoples that are yet to be born.[22] Permanent sovereignty over natural resources would therefore require the use of natural resources that is sustainable and ensure that exploitation activities that severely endanger the environment are open to censure. Going a bit of history, in 1958, France lost its struggles for colonies in Southeast Asia due unpopular support. It struggled at the time to contain a power liberation movement to hold its prize colony named Algeria. The then wartime leader General Charles de Gaulle stepped in to 'save' the Republic from total collapse. The French in Francophone countries are facing massive resistance neocolonialism which was pushed through by DE Gaulle's dream of al almost monarchical president. Emmanuel Macron has also made it known to pushing this type of draconian neoliberal monarchical presidents who are puppets to the French leadership style against popular overwhelming opposition.

The recent address by Ibrahim Traore to the Western media is an eye opener to the global community. According to him, a military leader of 34 years old is tagged a military dictator but here he talked about the misrepresentation of Africa by the Western media. The West through their Media made Africa to be ashamed of themselves, never saw anything good in Africa, always reporting the dark side of Africa; how the west were only reading a script, betrayed Africa and told heaps of lies; Africa was painted as creatures who had no share in humanity, painted as savages; Africa was painted as a land of hunger, war, diseases and corruption; never shown Africa's success story but good at show-casing Africa's failures. He questions some of the good deeds in Africa such as the Kenyan Entrepreneurial Ecosystem, Botswana's democratic success and many others which were undermined by the Europe and America because it does not fit their system. This young African asked why no one has ever asked why the world's richest land is in poverty. African owns the 70 percent of the world's cooper reserves; cell phones. Computer and electric cars are made of cobalt. Africa owns 90 percent of the world's platinum reserves. Catalytic converters and electronic devices and medical implants all need platinum which comes from South Africa but same South Africans are crushed by unemployment. Africa provide 30 percent of the world's gold production; Mali, Burkina Faso, Tanzania and Ghana; gold flows like river from Africa but Africa swims in poverty. Africa supplies 65 percent of the world's diamond; Botswana, Angola, Congo, Sierra lone. Every year, billions of dollars were extracted but Africa's miners live at less than one dollar a day; Africa own more than 35 percent of the world's Uranium reserves; Niger, Namibia, South Africa; nuclear plants run on Africa's Uranium, most of European lights burns with Africa's Uranium but most villages and towns in Africa have no lights and question may be asked; why is Africa poor instead of asking correctly; why is Africa made poor? During colonialism, African was ruled by wit but exchange by citing of industries and extracting or raw materials by wits of neocolonialism by agreements. Some concrete examples of such industries include Glencore, a Swiss based mining giant extracting Cobalt in Congo with revenue of $256 billion in 2022; British-Austrian Mining giant and tax paid to Congo was only $500 million which is 0.2 percent of the total revenue. Rio Tinto – British Austrian mining giant extracting Bauxite in Guinea of 20 million tons annually but what is left for Guinea is environmental pollution and cancer. Total energies – French oil mining giant extracting oil in Nigeria, Angola and Congo; in year 2022, it declared profit of $36 billion investment in Africa; dirty pipelines. Aglo-American founded in South Africa but now in London; diamonds, platinum and Iron; they have taken everything and what is left in South Africa; six million unemployed miners. There are so many invincible deals unknown to the people of Africa; the repatriation money tricks, every year $88 billion flows out of Africa; but no one writes about this but when a little aid comes to Africa, everyone writes about it but everyone fails to say that African is not the one receiving aid but the one giving aid and one may ask, is this justice?

France system in Africa is the CFA because about fourteen countries in Africa uses CFA while 50 percent of these countries' reserve sits in the central bank France and negative interests is supplied to this money which simply means that these countries paid France to use their own money and through this system, French transfer $500 billion from Africa every year and yet no one writes about it and when French gives Africa one hundred Euros the whole world will know of it as it would make headlines in the media. In order to address these challenges, the Francophone African countries may need to do more. It is a matter of time whether Burkina Faso would go down like others because, it is in history that when Guinea decided to issue its own national currency in 1960, France organized a sabotage operation to destabilize the new country thereby sending in her secrets service agents,[23] flooding the economy with false banknotes and succeeded and disrupting everything. It would appear that

[20] Murombo T. 'Law and the indigenisation of mineral resources in Zimbabwe: An Equity for Local Communities?', 25 *SA Public Law* (2010), 568–589, at p. 577.
[21] Crawford, J. 'The rights of peoples: 'peoples' or 'governments'?', 9 *Bulletin of the Australian Society of Legal Philosophy* (1985), 136–147
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ndongo, S.A et al., How France Continues to Dominate Its Former Colonies in Africa (2021)<Available at *https://www.cadtm.org/Africa-How-France-Continues-to-Dominate-Its-Former-Colonies-in-Africa>accessed* on 2 June, 2025.

from that moment, the heat is on those Francophone African leadership who must be on good terms with France it they must stay in power.

4. Addressing the Perfect Coup Causes in Africa: Revolutionary Challenge

The latter half of the 20th century and the subsequent period have seen the resurgence of external influence over African states, commonly referred to as neocolonialism, wherein Western powers exert control through various means.[24] It is evident that African states have been subject to a form of dependency since gaining nominal independence.[25] Through the operations of multinational corporations, in conjunction with international institutions and frameworks, Western powers have significantly impacted the governance, economic systems, and cultural identity of African states.[26] Over the past six decades, the persistence of the CFA franc can be attributed to a convergence of interests between French elites, who have predominantly adhered to a territorial ritual approach, and African elites, who have largely embraced capitalist principles.[27] Notably, the French government has acquiesced to capitalist logic, as evidenced by the 1994 devaluation of the CFA franc and the subsequent implementation of the Balladur Doctrine.[28] Conversely, West and Central African governments attempted to reorient the CFA franc towards a more developmental approach in the 1970s. However, pressure exerted by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the French Treasury in the wake of the 1980s sovereign debt crisis compelled many African leaders to acquiesce to neoliberal reforms,[29] thereby reasserting the primacy of capitalist logic.[30] This was long ago and it is surprising that the French has become the growing cancer on the economy of her colonies while the world watch and say or do nothing because it is Africa. The continued existence of the CFA franc can be attributed to a symbiotic relationship between French elites' adherence to territorial policies and African elites' adoption of capitalist principles, as observed over the past six decades.[31] The 1994 devaluation of the CFA franc and the subsequent implementation of the Balladur Doctrine exemplify the French government's acquiescence to capitalist logic. Conversely, West and Central African governments' attempts to reorient the CFA franc towards a more developmentalist approach in the 1970s were ultimately thwarted by pressure from international financial institutions, including the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, in the wake of the 1980s sovereign debt crisis, leading to the adoption of neoliberal reforms.[32] In order to gain greater control over their economic systems, there is need for reintegration of generational change by unethical means of taking hold of the control of their natural resources. The idea of lack of control of permanent sovereignty over natural resources is a perfect cause for the present Francophone African Coup waves.[33] According to a report by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), terrorist groups have indeed expanded their control in Burkina Faso, leading to significant displacement and school closures. Over 2.8 million people being forcibly displaced across Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso.[34]

5. Economic Coercion and Asset Return Trajectory

Economic coercion in international law is simply the use of or hazard of economic measures put in place to compel a state to act against its will due to lack of economic powers thereby ceding its sovereign rights economic foreign domination.[35] This can sometimes and most often times include the use, or threat to use, 'measures of an economic—as contrasted with diplomatic or military—character taken to induce [a target State] to change some policy or practices or even its governmental structure.[36] It appears that the French gave the West African Francophone countries independence but tied their economies to a stake and bade about their natural resources for France agenda. This may be referred to as leveraging economic power to influence these countries' economic policies. In the 60s, it was no big deal about the contentions of the founding fathers of the French-speaking countries as they all wanted independence. The present generation thought otherwise. Most of the assets of the West African Francophone countries are in the hands of their colonial masters while the people warped in economic slavery as most of the industries are concentrated in the hands of foreigners. One may be tempted to ask, what is sovereignty without control of natural resources? Was this not the reason most of the African countries desired independence? The understanding of sovereignty is to the effect that countries should be allowed to deal sufficiently on their natural resources. It is somewhat generally understood

---

[24] Segun J. 'Neo-Colonisation Of Africa And The OAU (1988) *India Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 1/2 (January-June 1988), Pp. 59-82 (24 pages) Sage Publications, Ltd<Available at https://www.jstor.org/stable/45072253>accessed on 2 June 2025.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27]Francisco J. P. 'An Enduring Neocolonial Alliance: A History of the CFA Franc (2023) <Available at https://doi.org/10.1111/ajes.12485>accessed on 2 June, 2025.

[28] Finupi D. C. 'The CFA Franc Devaluation and Output Growth in the Franc Zone' *International Journal of Financial Research* (2012) vol.3(1): 707-707<Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265798017_The_CFA_Franc_Devaluation_and_Output_Growth_in_the_Franc_Zone>accessed on 2 June 2025.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Mkandawire, T. (2001). Thinking about developmental states in Africa. Cambridge Journal of Economics, 25(3), 289-314.

[32] Finupi D. C. 'The CFA Franc Devaluation and Output Growth in the Franc Zone' *International Journal of Financial Research* (2012) vol.3(1): 707-707.

[33] Baltoi D. 'A deeper look into the West African Coup Waves;(2023)<Available at https://www.fpri.org/article/2023/01/a-deeper-look-into-the-west-african-coup-wave/>accessed on 4 June, 2025.

[34] Demuynck, M 'Mass Displacement and Violent Extremism in the Sahel: A Vicious Circle?(2022) Policy Brief<Available at https://icct.nl/sites/default/files/2022-12/meryl-policy-brief-final-version.pdf>accessed on 6 June 2025.

[35] Carter Barry E. 'Economic Coercion' (2021)<available on https://opil.ouplaw.com/display/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e1518>accessed on 21 June, 2025.

[36] Ibid.

to encompass actions of economic and trade freedom even if this term was not explicitly defined within the concept of sovereignty in international law.

On the other hand, Asset recovery from the context of Francophone Africa has to do with how to limit influences of France on the economy some of these countries. According to UNCTAD's Economic Development in Africa Report 2020 says stopping illicit capital flight could almost cut in half the annual financing gap of $200 billion that the continent faces to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. [37] It may be argued that sovereignty is not being a 'farce and deceit.' It is a power dynamic which most powerful nations wear as apron to share international relations and influence weaker states. It may also be seen from the weakness of international law because while it recognizes sovereignty, it may not always be able to prevail on powerful nations from exerting influence or control of weaker state. Asset return trajectory refers to the part of returns on an investment on asset overtime. It solidly refers to the performance of the asset, including any gains or losses, and can be influence by various factors such as inflation and market conditions, economic trends and geopolitical events.[38]

France's control over the West African CFA franc, a currency used by several Francophone West African Countries, and its influence over their economic policies. Asset recovery refers to France's diminishing influence and control over the region's economic and political assets on economic and political affairs and policies. One of such discontentment was the seizing of power in a coup in 2022, in Burkina Faso which regime ditched former colonial power France in favour of a stronger alliance with Russia which include deployment of a Russian paramilitary brigade, and adopted left-wing economic policies which is perceived to benefit the people of the country. This included setting up a state-owned mining company, requiring foreign firms to give it a 15% stake in their local operations and to transfer skills to Burkinabé people. The rule also applied to Russian miner Nordgold, which was given a licence in late April for its latest investment in Burkina Faso's gold industry.[39] Thus, return trajectory on this context suggest that France's influence and control over these assets should and ought to decrease not only with France but also with other powers like china, Russia and Turkey who now fills the vacuum. This shift should bring significant growth implications for the region's economic, political and security landscape. The lack of satisfaction may have accounted to why Burkina Faso to have reason to hatch a coup on the group of what may be referred to as negative imperialism which convulsed to military leadership. Burkina Faso is just one of the countries in Africa that feel cheated in the subject of sovereignty and illicit transfer of funds overseas.[40] It is true that while international law recognizes right to self-determination and sovereignty, it also continue to lay emphasis on democratic governance, human rights and the rule of law.[41] The justification France's continuing sitting on the assets of her former colony under international is challenging because of the argument of self defence or protection of national interests from economic coercion and response to undue external interference or neocolonialism. Exploitation of African resources by external powers is a longstanding issue. Most African countries feel that their natural resources are being extracted and used for the benefit of others, that than for the development of their own countries thereby leaving their countries impoverished.[42] This accounts for why the African Union has faced criticism for its respond to the issues like neocolonialism resourced exploitation. An argument at the front burner is that AU should and could do more to protect African interest and promote self-determination in economic self-reliance and political decisions. Fortunately, AU may have taken steps to promote African unity and development but there is still room for improvement in addressing the foregoing resources exploitation and garment of neocolonialism.[43]

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, escaping neocolonialism for Francophone West Africa requires a multi-faceted approach. African must learn to adopt a Regional Currency: Establishing a West African regional currency, such as the proposed 'eco,' could help reduce dependence on the CFA franc, which is pegged to the euro and controlled by France ad infinitum. This would allow Francophone countries to manage their monetary policies independently and make decisions that benefit their economies. Another area is the diversification of economies of the region. Africa must drastically, reduce reliance on single industries and develop local manufacturing habits to decrease dependence on foreign goods which comes with foreign exchange. This can be achieved through investments in education, agricultural innovation, and infrastructure to promote indigenous industries. The situation whereby foreign exchange control exchange reserves control has become a nightmare for most African French-speaking countries must be put under control and brought to a stop; rather than being required to deposit a significant portion in the French Treasury. This would enable them to utilize their reserves for development projects and investments. When the above is achieved, there should be transparent management of the Natural Resources within the domains of Africa to ensure

[37]Michael Kuhlmann 'Africa could gain $89 billion annually by curbing illicit financial flows' (2020)<Available at https://unctad.org/news/africa-could-gain-89-billion-annually-curbing-illicit-financial-flows>accessed on 21 July 2025.

[38] Benard I. Odoh 'Illicit Financial Flows in the Solid Minerals Sector: A Global Challenge' (2024)<Available at https://360.rmrdc.gov.ng/illicit-financial-flows-in-the-solid-minerals-sector-a-global-challenge/>accessed on 21 July 2025.

[39] Chothia F. 'Why Burkina Faso's junta leader has captured hearts and minds around the world'<Available at https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1egely9v3go>accessed on 21 July 2025.

[40] Monkam N 'African Strategies to Combat Illicit Financial Flows'<Available at https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/11/illicit-financial-flows-africa-tax?lang=en>accessed on 21 July 2025.

[41]Batistich M. 'The Right to Self-Determination and International Law' (1995) <Available at https://www8.austlii.edu.au/nz/journals/AukULawRw/1995/7.pdf>accessed on 21 July 2025

[42]Agambila D 'Africa loses $88.6 billion each year to illegal money transfers – Report' (2025) <Available at https://africa.businessinsider.com/local/lifestyle/africa-loses-dollar886-billion-each-year-to-illegal-money-transfers-report/qp1c7fs.

[43]Obikwelu, I.J et.al. 'The Effects of Neocolonialism on Africa's Development' (2023) Available at</www.researchgate.net/public ation/ 373812165_The_Effects_of_Neocolonialism_on_Africa's_Development#read>accessed on 21 July 2025.

the prevention of exploitation and corruption. Fair trade practices is a must-demand from foreign investor to build trust and equitable agreement with their foreign investors to ensure that African countries receive a fair share of the benefits from their natural resources which presently the agitation of most Francophone countries in West Africa.

Africa should look in word for Inter-African Trade: Encourage trade among African countries to reduce dependence on foreign exports and promote economic integration. This can be achieved through regional trade agreements and investments in infrastructure.

Investment in education should be pivotal to Innovative development: Africa need to develop more skills and knowledge in areas such as technology, supply chain management, and entrepreneurship to promote local economic growth and development and take control of her natural resources.

Africa especially, the French-speaking must assert sovereignty: Francophone countries should assert their sovereignty and challenge external influence, whether from France or other global powers. This can be achieved through diplomatic efforts, strategic partnerships, and regional cooperation and where such fails, through coup as it happened in Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali ever though, their actions were termed undemocratic.

The long-aged Pan-Africanism and solidarity should be reawakened: Africa in order to avoid constant coups should foster pan-Africanism and solidarity among African countries to promote collective action and cooperation in addressing neocolonialism.