

A critique of French and British decolonisation in Africa: Why are so many African countries turning towards China and Russia?

Samuel Pesez

Supervisor: Dr Harris Dousemetzis



- (i) *Introduction*
- (ii) *The Hypocrisy of Decolonisation*
- (iii) *A Union of Unequal States*
- (iv) *An Economic Decolonisation Still Waiting to Happen*
- (v) *The Chinese and Russian Alternative*
- (vi) *Conclusion*
- (vii) *Bibliography*

(i) INTRODUCTION.

Russia and China are the latest countries to join the race in expanding their sphere of economic, political, and military influence across the African continent. The Global North have been quick to rush to criticise their human rights records or their methods of exploitation, and the Global North is right to do so for Russia and China must be held accountable. The contradiction in this is that the Global North has not been held accountable for its behaviour in Africa or around the world, and they have been hiding behind their criticism of Russia and China whilst they themselves behave in inhumane and exploitative ways. This is an important topic to research due to this drastic shift in power from Europe and the USA to Russia and China which has occurred in the 21st century and attempting to understand why this is the case and how much the impact of decolonisation plays a part in this.

In this paper colonialism will be defined as a practice of domination involving the subjugation of one group of people by another, particularly the process of European settlement, possession, and domination of countries in the Global South (Kohn and Reddy, 2023). It should be noted however, that whilst this paper will discuss the African continent and African countries in general terms this is not to take away from the diversity, individual identity, and individual story which each African country possesses. The analysis endeavours to provide an overview of the impacts of decolonisation and the influence which Russia and China have on the continent without negating the fact that Africa is made up of a multitude of languages, cultures, history, climates and identities but with a shared history of colonialism. The research was carried out via a two-step process. Firstly, by looking at literature on the context of colonisation and the subsequent decolonisation which followed. Secondly, by analysing the implications that decolonisation has on the world today, and by studying current news articles and literature around the impacts of decolonisation.

This paper will seek to understand the true impacts and current behaviours of France and Britain in Africa after their colonies were granted independence, analysing how they have or have not decolonised the continent. This will be done in order to answer the question of why so many African countries are turning towards Russia and China who are doing the same things, and arguably worse, that the Global North, particularly Britain and France, did to them for centuries. The section on "*The Hypocrisy of Decolonisation*" will explore the European idea of what a state should be and how this has been kept out of reach of decolonised countries for the Global North to maintain influence without responsibility. "*A Union of Unequal States*" will unpick what the British Commonwealth and French Francophonie really symbolise and how they impact African unity and prosperity. The section on "*An Economic Decolonisation Still Waiting to Happen*" will explore the international monetary system which exists today dominated by the USA and the old European colonial powers to benefit themselves. Finally, the "*Chinese and Russian Alternative*" will draw on the influence and current actions being carried out by Russia and China across the continent. Each section is aimed at discerning the motives and frustrations which have led to African countries to look elsewhere, in Russia and China, for help in their development whilst harming themselves even further in the process.

(ii) THE HYPOCRISY OF DECOLONISATION.

The art of state building is a power which till this day has been reserved and gate kept by the Global North. Ever since the beginning of European colonialism and state building, the European states had a superiority complex that their method of civilisation was superior to any others (Hayes et al, 2017) and believed that they were benefiting the countries they were colonising. This attitude can be seen in Lord Lugard (Mitchell, 2011) describing the role of the imperial countries as "making advancements of the subject races" and "the development of its material resources for the benefit of mankind" or similarly Reverend Muller (Césaire, 1975: 39) justifying colonising by describing the "uncivilised people" as incompetent, negligent and lazy. The colonial powers dominated and used violence in the Global South under the guise of establishing the rule of law, civilising the natives, and spreading Christianity. In reality there was only one rule of law which existed, for the "civilised" European countries (Hayes et al, 2017), being the rights, liberties and justice systems enjoyed by Europeans which were absent in their colonies.

The colonial powers never offered their colonies the opportunity to develop themselves into a state in the traditional "Westphalian sovereignty" sense of what a state is, as the bureaucracy and administration established in the African colonies was cheap and minimalistic (Welz, 2021). The administration was there to serve the sole purpose of benefitting the colonial powers and maintaining a certain level of uniformity across their empires. As soon as the colonial powers left, it left a vacuum of authority across the continent and the former colonies were compelled to build states from scratch without having the thousands of years of foundations and state building which Europe had enjoyed previously. Charles Tilly describes that "*war made the state, and the state made the war*" (Tilly, 1975), a statement which holds true for the European continent which had experienced thousands of years of wars, such as the Thirty Year war which ended with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 or the two world wars in the 20th century which completely redrew and reestablished the state borders and sovereignty enjoyed by each country. This blueprint of what a state should be was impossible to replicate for African countries because Westphalian sovereignty had not only been conceptualised to consolidate European states but also to justify colonialism (Bauder and Mueller, 2021).

The granting of independence and decolonisation was meant to triumph the turning of a new page in history towards unity, collaboration, and a respect of one another's ability to choose their own destiny after centuries of exploitation and following the horrors committed by the Nazis in the Second World War. This did not materialise because decolonisation set the ball rolling for an era, which arguably has not ended, of hypocrisy, denial, and manipulation. Decolonisation was the hypocrisy of Europeans having committed atrocities of their own across the globe for centuries, such as the British concentration camps in South Africa during the Second Boer War, criticising the Nazis for their actions, as if they had the moral high ground (Césaire, 1975). Decolonisation was the denial that the European method of civilising had not in fact "*civilised*" the natives of the colonies but had instead stripped them of their national identity, such as the forceful implementation of the French language in many of France's former colonies. Decolonisation was the manipulation of presenting investments as helping to develop the newly independent countries whilst in fact trying to hold them in the cycle of dependency

(see *An Economic Decolonisation Still Waiting to Happen*). The aftershocks of this behaviour are still very much visible today, whether it is the Western wars waged in the Middle East, the hidden propping up of governments across Africa and the Americas or the civil wars waging due to the European divide and rule policies in its colonies. Meanwhile, the Global North is still intent on perpetuating its false truths that colonialism was a civilising force, or that it modernised countries or list all the material benefits colonialism brought to the countries it penetrated. The caveat to all these supposed benefits is often forgotten as colonialism has left behind countries grieving their past, forgotten traditions, religions and cultures, economic dependency, and an inability to develop without foreign interference. The truth is that this “*Europeanisation*” or “*modernisation*” would have occurred even without colonialism (Césaire, 1975) and at a pace where the countries could actually keep up with because the countries would have been allowed to develop without interference and by their own means with respect to their identity and culture.

Decolonisation should have signalled a new push from the old colonial powers to help their newly independent former colonies to build stable and internationally recognised states. Instead, the African continent was left with a series of haphazard borders which did not respect religious, ethnic or traditional lines and a multitude of different governments and motivations of what each country wanted their state to resemble. For example, the Kingdom of Eswatini gained independence from the United Kingdom (UK) in 1968 as a constitutional monarchy but by 1973 the King abolished the constitution making Eswatini an absolute monarchy claiming it was more representative of the existing culture within the country. This demonstrates the instability which exists within many African countries which can also be seen in today’s military coup in Niger in July 2023. Additionally, despite only emitting 3.8% of the world’s total CO₂ emissions (Statista, 2023), due to the geography of the continent, Africa has borne the full brunt of the impacts of climate change (Welz, 2021). The lack of culpability the Global North has taken since granting its former colonies independence is illustrated in the fact that the African continent is suffering from natural disasters ranging from floods to droughts to cyclones and anything in-between, that have even further hindered its economic development. It must be highlighted that whilst they are not the cause of these increasingly extreme climate conditions, countries in Africa are once again having to deal with the consequences of the actions by the Global North. There is a great injustice in this because it is not enough for the old colonial powers to have politically amicable relations with their former colonies or support them with aid but there must be a recognition that even after decolonisation their actions have drastic implications for countries in Africa. Not only economically, politically, or socially but there are now tangible geographical implications which they have. The true impacts of decolonisation should not be viewed as only isolated to certain issues but as holistic. This “*last stage of imperialism*” (Nkrumah, 1965) (see pg. 8) is worse than the colonisation of the 18th, 19th, and 20th century because now the old colonial powers believe that they bear no responsibility for their former colonies. As they are no longer under their control and due to having “*sovereignty*”, the European states believe that their former colonies should be able to autonomously deal with crises within their countries unless they impact the European states.

The easy answer to these challenges is to argue that colonisation should never have occurred. This is a given fact, but history cannot be undone. Therefore, the solution to this is to dismantle the Global Norths attitude of superiority, as discussed earlier, and cultivate

a better understanding of the cultures within the ex-colonies to develop solutions which work to benefit the Global South, not the Global North, and create stable states. However, this is still not the case because colonialism, or its shadow, is still very much alive and kicking today as colonialism dictates the languages spoken in these countries, the side of the road they drive on (Welz, 2021) and the existence of organisations such as the Commonwealth and la Francophonie.

(iii) A UNION OF UNEQUAL STATES.

Colonisation, in the official term as we know it, ended by the turn of the 21st century but the legacy of colonialism remains. This legacy is consolidated in the formalisation of organisations such as the British Commonwealth and the French Francophonie. These two organisations fostered different cultures and climates amongst their member states but they both served the purpose of the old colonial powers maintaining tangible ties with their former colonies.

The British Commonwealth claims that it is an organisation “*working towards shared goals*” (The Commonwealth, 2023). The association was created in 1931 following the 1926 Imperial Conference with membership exclusively for Britain’s white dominions including Australia, New Zealand, the Irish Free State, Newfoundland, Canada, and South Africa. This “white man’s” club (Holmes, 1962) was formed to give these countries independence whilst forcing them to owe allegiance to the British monarch creating strong cultural and trade relationships. Since then, much has changed within the Commonwealth. As discussed earlier, Britain realised that if it wanted to maintain any semblance of influence in its former colonies then it would be nonsensical to maintain direct control. This is reflected in the symbolic and hands off approach by the British monarch today who is the head of the Commonwealth. However, this was not always the case as initially the Commonwealth only accepted countries which accepted the British monarch as their head of state. The policy was reversed after partition in 1947 between India and Pakistan because as of the 1949 London Declaration the Commonwealth accepted the membership of republics in order for India and Pakistan, who did not want to owe allegiance to the British monarch, to join the Commonwealth. This represented a shift in attitude as the Commonwealth became the solution for Britain having to deal with rising nationalism and unrest in its African colonies as they could be granted self-government but still tied to Britain (Holmes, 1962). Now the Commonwealth is a diverse amalgamation of 56 countries from Africa, Asia, the Pacific, Europe, and North America with 36 of these member countries being republics (The Commonwealth, 2023). The multiracial diversity within the Commonwealth perpetuated the changing attitude in how Britain viewed its former colonies and former empire. It demonstrated an acceptance that Britain could not change its past and the problems which the empire caused but Britain could change the present and future and capitalise on the virtues which came from these challenges. The new Commonwealth which exists today is no longer a blood relationship (Holmes, 1962) with Britain, it is now a cultural relationship and progressive force where white people are the minority, the opposite to what it was when it was first established.

The attitude which Britain has towards the member countries of the Commonwealth is not the only attitude which has evolved, so has the relationship which these countries have with Britain. Initially London was viewed as the centre of the Commonwealth, any changes or decisions made by member states had to run through London, but this is no longer the reality. With the development of the UN and other international organisations, such as BRICS, this has enabled countries within the Commonwealth to build relationships with other countries without the interference of the institution. This has led to the decline of Britain's control and importance in international relations. It is not to say that Britain's former colonies are now free to choose their own destiny because the control of their destiny and the unipolar power has shifted away from Britain towards the USA who holds the top seat and the effective veto at all the international organisations. The economic and military dealignment within the Commonwealth, due to US dominance and the establishment of NATO and SEATO during the Cold War, has only meant Britain's former colonies are having deal with the challenges from a different Global North superpower. The hard power which Britain had is non-existent and the soft power slowly but surely declining as the Commonwealth now only represents a common set of values (Welz, 2021), such as democracy and the rule of law, a shared history, and a faltering commitment to maintain strong trade relations.

On the other hand, France and la Francophonie represents an "iron fist in a silk glove" approach and an unwavering insistence for France's former colonies to be reminded who really controls their destiny. This can be seen in their emphasis on the French language and culture (Welz, 2021) within its former colonies and its commitment to maintaining cooperation amongst its member states (La Francophonie, 2023). However, France is the sleeping giant in modern day neocolonialism as it appeared and appears to comply with the 1960 UN Resolution 1514 to end colonialism by granting its colonies independence and seemingly allowing them to function autonomously. France has been functioning under the radar because this is not the reality, the reality is that when granting independence to its former colonies France put colonial administrators in place and called it independence (Etogho et al, 2023), the reality is that France established a monetary system to benefit itself and the reality is that many of France's former African colonies are unable to detach themselves from *Françafrique*.

All of this has been carried out under the guise of the grandiose and internationally respected International Organisation of la Francophonie (OIF) which was founded in 1970 and has 88 member states from across the globe with 320 million French speakers, 60% which are in Africa (la Francophonie, 2023). Despite Britain establishing the Commonwealth during its time as a coloniser, France established its own "commonwealth" after its empire had fallen showing the French desperation to reestablish itself in the international order. As European states left the African continent, granting self-government to their colonies, France capitalised on the situation to become the new superpower in the continent. Whilst colonialism may have ended with independence, this was arguably only the beginning to French colonialism as they have been active economically, politically, and militarily across the continent, and increasingly so. This can be seen in France supporting the Hutus in Rwanda who went on to carry out a genocide (*Le Monde*, 2017 in Etogho et al, 2023) or when the French bank BNP Paribas was fined \$9 billion by the US for violating international sanctions in Sudan (Ax et al, 2014 in Etogho et al, 2023). Colonies such as Rwanda and Sudan were never French colonies, they were Belgian and British respectively, but France took the opportunity to spread its influence

when these colonies became independent. One of the main objectives of the OIF, as noted before, is to spread the French speaking language and even make it the one of the top three most spoken languages in the world (French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, 2022). This objective initially seems benign as there should not be anything wrong with encouraging people to speak a common language as it should increase cooperation and is just another consequence of living in a globalised world. However, this narrative fails to understand the implications of such an objective, because for France this objective means permeating every aspect of life and governance within countries and rebuilding an empire simply through putting la langue française on a pedestal creating a cultural loyalty (Thérien, 1993).

This highlights an underlying problem with French decolonisation, as whilst Britain is somewhat honest about its motives with the Commonwealth and the US unapologetic about its rampant neocolonialism, France is in denial and attempting to hide its true motives. This is not to wash over and excuse British or US neocolonialism but draw attention to the French denial. Such denial can be seen when France claims that they carried out military intervention in countries such as Mali and Niger to oust Islamic militants whilst Niger is the biggest producer of uranium in Africa and the 7th biggest in the world (Reuters, 2023) and Mali has uranium stores (World Nuclear Association, October 2022). Although France has done much to quell the Islamic threat in the Sahel and brought about temporary stability in the region it is important to note that France in fact owns 90% of Orano, the mining company exploiting uranium stores in Niger, and Niger produces 20% of France's uranium (le Monde, August 2023) ever since France stopped mining on its own soil. Now that countries such as the Mali, Niger, Gabon, and Burkina Faso have had military coups recently, a major factor in these was the exposing of France's true motives of protecting its right of being the first country to buy resources from its ex-colonies (Spagnol, 2019).

Although there is a dishonesty to the French, the overarching problem with allegiances such as the French Francophonie and the British Commonwealth is that they prohibit African integration. They strip the continent of anything they had in common and forces African countries to compete against one another when they could be cooperating and collaborating. This does not mean that Africa is not prospering, as it has six of the world's ten fastest growing economies (Etogho et al, 2023) but it means they are unable to prosper together and all the benefits of such prosperity do not stay within the continent but go back to the old European colonial powers and the USA.

(iv) AN ECONOMIC DECOLONISATION STILL WAITING TO HAPPEN.

Many would be fooled into assuming that in the aftermath of the Second World War the subsequent political decolonisation which occurred across the African continent throughout the 1950s until the end of the 20th century was coupled with an economic decolonisation. However, such an assumption is farfetched and unrealistic considering

that for hundreds of years the international monetary system was structured in such a way as to exploit the colonies in Africa, Asia, and South America. Dismantling such a system would be nigh on impossible especially considering that the old European imperial powers required this exploitative system to even stand a chance at competing against the newfound US dollar dominance and the new Cold War superpowers of the USSR and the USA. As global power shifted from the USA and the USSR to the likes of China, India and Japan, the international monetary system did little to change, simply its objectives and purpose of the system adapted to the new climate.

Africa as a continent had the potential to be one of the largest economies in the world due to its oil, mineral and water reserves and the vast swathes of arable land which could be developed (Welz, 2021). Yet, as a result of continued European exploitation, even after much of the continent gained independence, this potential remains untapped. The colonial economies were built on the export of raw materials and a dependency on the world market price of these commodities. Rather than decolonisation presenting itself as an outlet for the former colonies to detach themselves from this economic system of dependency it consolidated it. Whilst some African economies switched from exporting minerals to oil, they still remained a primary goods economy. Kwame Nkrumah gave this phenomenon a name: neo-colonialism which he dubbed "the last stage of colonialism" and the most dangerous stage (Nkrumah, 1965). He described it as the state where countries appear to have independence, but their economy and politics is controlled by a foreign country. The impacts of such a phenomenon had a leaching effect on the continent where regardless of all the investment, aid, resources, and capital which foreign countries and companies pumped into the continent the majority of the profits and benefits of these enterprises went straight back to the foreign country. This can be seen in the cocoa production in Ghana where although its production increased by 380,000 tonnes between 1955 and 1965 its revenue decreased by £8.5million (Nkrumah, 1965). Having gained independence in 1957 one would have assumed that this would have empowered Ghana to spur its development and reap the rewards of this development. However, this example goes to show that this independence was meaningless, and it was, what Nkrumah called, the "neo-colonial masters" who were the biggest winners in this deal. Nkrumah goes on to cite a 1965 Wall Street Journal Article which describes that despite industrial countries adding \$2billion to their reserves, less developed countries lost \$200million (Nkrumah, 1965). There seems to be a paradox which is a running theme throughout the impacts of decolonisation, being that although the ex-colonies gained independence, they simultaneously became less free to control their own destiny.

The ex-colonies in Africa attempted to detach themselves from the neo-colonial system imposed on them by turning towards Marxist-Leninist or socialist models, as Nkrumah did with Ghana, but the task was hopeless. Contrary to the majority of the ex-colonies' exports going to Europe or the USA, this only made up a fraction of the imports for the receiving country. This imbalance is demonstrative of the wider inequality in the partnership between former colonies and the former colonisers. The European agricultural subsidies in the 1970s which were implemented to ensure that the European farmers would remain competitive against the Soviets, but these subsidies simultaneously weakened the bargaining power of African farmers who could not keep up with the market prices (Welz, 2021). Similarly, the European free trade agreements with the continent are presented as being mutually beneficial but in reality, are neo-colonial packages. The task for the ex-colonies was made even more challenging following the collapse of the USSR as all

socialist organisation or unity disappeared with it. Despite the development of beneficial schemes for African countries such as the African Development Bank Group, the ex-colonies quickly felt obliged out of necessity to turn towards the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank essentially conforming to the capitalist economic integration forced upon them by the Global North.

During the process of decolonisation France and Britain adopted different approaches to both the economic and political granting of independence of its African colonies. The ultimate goal however remained the same; to maintain financial control and exploitation of these colonies. Britain strived to maintain amicable relationships with its ex-colonies to have soft power and easy investment opportunities. This is evident in the fact that Britain remains the biggest receiver of exports from the majority of its former colonies in Africa (Welz, 2021), with the exception of Egypt. For France the opposite is the case, as the biggest receiver of exports from French former colonies have turned away from France to either the USA, Russia or other European countries. This demonstrates the sour relationships which France has with its former colonies after decolonisation because rather than resorting immediately to neo-colonial policies, as Britain did, by giving their colonies independence but still keeping influence, there was a reluctance to the French approach. France sort to directly hold onto its colonies for as long as possible. This led to major conflicts, such as the wars in Vietnam (1946-54) and Algeria (1954-62). Upon seeing the chaos which ensued from attempting to keep hold of its colonies and seeing the relative economic success Britain was achieving, France thus resorted to a set of neo-colonial policies. They highlighted the attitude of the international monetary system has towards former colonies and the Global South even today. France's neo-colonial policies came under the "*Communauté Financière Africaine*" or informally the CFA franc area (Koddenbrock and Sylla, 2019).

Well into the end of the colonial period, in the 1930s, France and Britain established currency areas, the franc and sterling area respectively. These were created to protect their colonial economies from the US dollar dominance, the collapse of the gold standard and "money disintegration" (Koddenbrock and Sylla, 2019). The sterling area collapsed in 1979 due to the UK joining the EEC and Commonwealth countries pegging their currencies to the US dollar. On the other hand, the CFA franc area which had been established in 1945 under the pretence of facing franc devaluation, still stands today with a membership of 14 countries from Central and Western Africa, mostly former French colonies. This system epitomised the neo-colonialism which was to follow as France forced its colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa to sign up to the CFA franc area in return for independence. Since its conception, only three countries have successfully escaped from the grips of the CFA with two new countries joining. The system was designed to benefit "*la France metropol*", with France controlling each country's exchange rates, every country having to pool at least half of their foreign reserves into the French treasury's operational accounts and French companies having the ability to freely invest and divest in these countries (Koddenbrock and Sylla, 2019). Compared to the rest of the Global South, countries within the CFA franc area experience monetary repression and a lack of sovereignty unseen anywhere else. In addition to this, the countries are forced to keep a budget surplus to stay attractive to foreign investors forcing them to seek out loans from the IMF and the World Bank.

Neo-liberal international organisations, such as the IMF, perpetuate the former colonies' cycle of debt and exploitation they have experienced ever since the end of decolonisation. The Global North attempts to paint a picture as if these countries have a choice. But this choice is non-existent (Chen, 2021) if the choice is between defaulting or the IMF, lose investors or the IMF, or experience even more exploitation from Russia and China or the IMF. Being the world's "last resort lenders" there is never a choice when countries accept a loan from the IMF. Take for example Ghana, who in 2022 asked for their 17th IMF bail-out and have been under the grips of the IMF's supervision for 23 of the last 35 years (the Economist, August 2022). The power asymmetry which exists amongst the IMF's 190 members, with France and Britain each having around 4% of the vote share whilst Ghana and the Ivory Coast each have around 0.1%, is reminiscent of the colonial power imbalance which existed at the end of the 19th century. The Global North's methods may have changed but their objective remains the same, exploit. Instead of having boots on the ground, this time exploitation comes in the form of the IMF's conditional loans or Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs).

These loans are beneficial for the receiving countries as they encourage economic growth, Ghana for example has twice the GDP per capita than the average for countries in west Africa (the Economist, August 2022), and attracts foreign investors. All of these benefits come at a cost though for the poorest and most economically vulnerable due to the austerity measures which come packed with these loans. Between 2002 and 2018, in 79 countries which accepted IMF loans the wealthiest significantly benefitted at the expense of the bottom 80% (Boston University Global Development Policy Centre in Chen, 2021). These neo-liberal austerity measures, such as tax increases, budget cuts and privatisation, are suited for well-established capitalist economies in Rostow's final stage of economic growth, the "*Age of High Mass Consumption*" (Jacobs, 2020). The countries receiving these loans however are in the first or second stages of Rostow's growth model. Therefore, they do not have robust enough economies to bear the weight of these austerity measures, for example Mali in 2005 sort out an IMF loan to increase its healthcare budget but was forced to cut its healthcare spending even to get the loan (Chen, 2021). They are also forced to ask for further loans to alleviate the problems created by the previous loan. In addition to this the privatisation, as noted before, often demanded by the IMF leaves the countries vulnerable to foreign investors extracting all the profits from the country, which can be seen in Ecuador where 90% of the mines are owned by Canadian companies (Chen, 2021). All of these issues coupled with systems such as the CFA franc area and the rampant exporting of raw materials creates the perception, whether it is true or not, that the Global North is doing all it can to keep all of its former colonies, particularly in Africa, in Rostow's first stage of economic growth, "*Traditional Society*". This appears to be done to keep these countries in their sphere of influence to continue exploiting them.

(v) THE CHINESE AND RUSSIAN ALTERNATIVE

When the Global North is preventing African countries from truly embracing self-government, prohibiting any substantial integration, and economically exploiting the continent then one should really be asking themselves if they are surprised when many countries are turning towards Russia and China for political and economic assistance rather than the Global North. The reason is that African countries no longer believe that they have choice because if not Russia and China, the only other alternative is more of the same Global North neocolonial policies. African countries not only appreciate the financial assistance from the likes of China, but they also appreciate not being patronised (*The Economist*, May 2022) as they feel as if they are being treated as legitimate investment opportunities rather than being given handouts packaged with caveats. China has done this through the creation of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), first established in 2013, which now has 149 countries including China, with 38 sub-Saharan African countries, making up 2/3 of the world's population and 40% of global GDP (Council on Foreign Relations, February 2023). The BRI has made China Africa's largest traded partner and is investing \$1 trillion into the continent by 2025 (Tiboris, 2019). Although there are fears of more debt cycles and exploitation this does not bother many African leaders as their only requirement is that investment comes from someone other than their former coloniser. The Global North is frantically trying to counter the rising Chinese influence, such as through the USA's Build Back Better World or the EU's Global Gateway infrastructure-for-Africa but this could all be too little too late.

Meanwhile, Russia has made its presence known in the continent by encouraging anti-democracy movements and authoritarian regimes in Africa to undercut the Europeanisation which has occurred for centuries. Africa is fertile land for this type of ideology having already been manipulated by the Global North. It is also not too far from what has already been occurring in Africa with 78% of the 27 coups in sub-Saharan Africa since 1990 taking place in Francophone countries (BBC, August 2023). Russia has penetrated the continent to assert military dominance in order to access resources by signing 19 military agreements with African governments between 2015 and 2019 (Fasanotti, February 2023) and through the use of mercenary groups. One of the most renowned mercenary groups is the Wagner Group who have rampaged and pillaged the continent, particularly in the Central African Republic, Libya, Mali and Sudan which are some of the most disillusioned African countries with the Global North and with damaging colonial legacies (Council on Foreign Relations, May 2023). Most notably the Wagner Group led a disinformation campaign against the French in Mali which led to the military coup in May 2021 and subsequent expulsion of French military. The Global North has rapidly lost its foothold in the continent as a direct result of Russian and Chinese involvement

From the perspective of the Global North, they are outraged and worried about Russia and China's hawkish behaviour, with the Global North's desperation being demonstrated in Biden declaring that the USA is "all in for Africa's future" (Reuters, December 2022), but there is not much they can do to stop it. This is because Russia and China are simply doing what the Global North is already doing but more aggressively, meaning that they have no

grounds to object. For African countries the Russian and Chinese alternative is precisely just another alternative.

(vi) CONCLUSION

Overall, the real answer to the initial question of “Why are so many African countries turning towards Russia and China?”, despite all the implications which come with doing so as I have outlined, lies in the definition of colonialism. At the beginning of the paper, colonialism was defined as domination, involving the subjugation of one group by another. African countries, despite being granted independence decades ago, are still being dominated and are experiencing subjugation by their former colonisers, such as France and Britain. With the exception of settlement, by the definition initially given, African countries are still effectively colonised. Therefore, the reason that African countries are turning towards Russia and China is because real decolonisation has not occurred yet, and it must. This paper has evidenced this lack of decolonisation by analysing the economic system which exists, with the IMF and CFA franc area withholding sovereignty from many African countries, and deconstructing organisations such as the Commonwealth and la Francophonie which force African countries to answer to their former colonisers in one way or another. The lack of decolonisation has also been demonstrated in how statehood has been retained from the continent and fixed in such a way as to benefit the European countries. It is then no surprise that African leaders are looking elsewhere for an alternative, even it is not a realistic or sustainable one. It is their way of spiting the powers who have subjugated them for centuries and proving them that they can in fact control their own destiny.

In order to reverse this, the Global North must change their attitude of patronising the continent and their superiority complex. Africa is not a continent which is to be belittled because it is and can prosper without interference, but they must be untangled from the international monetary system which is strangling them and allow African countries to independently collaborate and unite. If Russia and China are not to be the only alternative, then there must be tangible changes as well. The continent must be freed from domination and subjugation.

(vii) BIBLIOGRAPHY.

Anumo, F. (2020). 'Formerly colonized people can't breathe. And the IMF and World Bank are to blame'. [online] *openDemocracy*. 1 October 2020.

Bauder, H. and Mueller, R. (2021). 'Westphalian Vs. Indigenous Sovereignty: Challenging Colonial Territorial Governance'. *Geopolitics*, 28(1), pp. 1-18.

Césaire, A. (1972). Discourse on colonialism (Discourse sur le colonialisme, engl.). *New York Monthly Review Pr.*

Chatzky, A., McBride, J. and Berman, N. (2023). China's Massive Belt and Road Initiative. [online] *Council on Foreign Relations*.

Chen, J. (2021). Neocolonialism and the IMF. [online] *Harvard Political Review*.

Etogho, A., E.B., Eben, S.E. and Dalton, A.L. (2022). French Neocolonialism in Africa: Historical Overview and Summary of Current Events. *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 81(5), pp.829-849.

Fact Check-Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso not halting exports of uranium and gold. (2023). *Reuters*. [online] 2 Aug.

Fasanotti, F.S. (2022). Russia's Wagner Group in Africa: Influence, commercial concessions, rights violations, and counterinsurgency failure. [online] *Brookings*.

Gocking, R. (2005). *The History of Ghana*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.

Haynes, J., Hough, P. and Malik, S. (2017). World politics: international relations and globalisation in the 21st century. *London Sage*.

Heywood, A. (2014). *Global Politics*. 2nd ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Holmes, J. (1962). The Impact on the Commonwealth of the Emergence of Africa. *International Organization*, 16(2), pp.291-302.

IMF. (n.d.). IMF Members' Quotas and Voting Power, and IMF Board of Governors. [online]

Jacobs, J. (2020). Why Is Rostow's Stages of Growth Development Model Often Criticized?

Kent, J. (1992). *The internationalization of colonialism: Britain, France, and Black Africa, 1939-1956*. Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York.

Koddenbrock, K. and Ndongo Samba Sylla (2019). *Towards a Political Economy of Monetary Dependency*.

Kohn, M. and Reddy, K. (2023). Colonialism (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). [online] *Stanford.edu*.

Lavallée, E. and Lochard, J. (2012). Independence and trade: the specific effects of French colonialism.

Maad, A. (2023). How dependent is France on Niger's uranium? *Le Monde.fr*. [online] 4 Aug.

Mitchell, T. (2011). *Carbon democracy: political power in the age of oil*. Verso, Chapter 4.

Nedopil, C. (2022). Countries of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) - Green Finance & Development Centre. [online] *Green Finance & Development Centre*.

Niger coup: Is France to blame for instability in West Africa? (2023). *BBC News*. [online] 6 Aug.

Nkrumah, K. (1965). *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. London: Panaf.

Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie. (n.d.). Portail de l'Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF). [online]

Porter, B. (2012). *The lion's share: a short history of British imperialism, 1850 to the present*. Harlow, England; New York: Pearson.

Rampe, W. (2023). What Is Russia's Wagner Group Doing in Africa? [online] *Council on Foreign Relations*.

Shalal, A., Psaledakis, D. and Martina, M. (2022). Biden says U.S. is 'all in' on Africa's future. *Reuters*. [online] 15 Dec.

Spagnol, G. (2019). Is France still exploiting Africa? | *IERI*. [online]

The Commonwealth (2017). Our work | *The Commonwealth*. [online]

The Economist. (2022a). Countering China in Africa. [online]

The Economist. (2022b). The unexpected lesson of Ghana's 17th IMF bail-out. [online]

Thérien, J.-P. (1993). Co-operation and conflict in la Francophonie. *International Journal*, [online] 48(3), pp.492-526.

Tiboris, M. (2019). Addressing China's Rising Influence in Africa. [online] *globalaffairs.org*.

Tilly, C. (1975). *Formation of national states in western Europe*.

Welz, M. (2021). *Africa since Decolonization*. Cambridge University Press.

www.world-nuclear.org. (n.d.). Uranium in Africa - *World Nuclear Association*. [online]