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Njekang Martin Ndah
Peace Policy Consultant and Ph.D. Researcher in Peace and Conflict Studies, Department of History and International Studies, University of Calabar, Calabar-Nigeria.

Louis Ajom Edet
Lecturer in Security and Post Conflict Resolution, Department of History and International Studies, University of Calabar, Calabar-Nigeria.

Njekang Dieudonne Nkwati
PhD Researcher and Graduate Teaching Assistant, Department of Banking and Finance, Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences-University of Bamenda-Cameroon.

Nkeh Julius
Lecturer, Department of History and Archaeology, the University of Bamenda-Cameroon.

Maurice Ayuketang Nso
Department of Money and Banking Higher Institute of Commerce and Management (HICM) The University of Bamenda.

Correspondence:
Njekang Martin Ndah
Peace Policy Consultant and Ph.D. Researcher in Peace and Conflict Studies, Department of History and International Studies, University of Calabar, Calabar-Nigeria.

The Sahel Crisis and its Ramifications on International Relations

Njekang Martin Ndah, Louis Ajom Edet, Njekang Dieudonne Nkwati, Nkeh Julius, Maurice Ayuketang Nso

Abstract
The Sahel region in recent years has spotlighted an amazing amalgam of internally generated conflicts and regrettable scenes of the pervasive neo-colonialism. The meshing of these untoward forces transformed the region in to veritable hotbed of crisis that has attracted international attention or has determined the new dimension of international politics. In this light, the region effuses actions and circumstances that touch on international law, state fragility and politics with economic consequences. This piece therefore focuses on the community-based (internal) approaches to global problems by laying emphasis on the role of approaches in conflict resolution in the Sahel. This essay borrows mainly from secondary authoritative sources to comment on the Sahelian conflict and to sustain the argument that the intractability of Islamic insurgency, terrorism, and neo-colonialism in the region, dominated internal politics and accounted for the expulsion of France and America and the simmering relations with ECOWAS that birthed the Alliance of Sahel States. In essence, Sahelian response to the region's conflicts ushered in a new world order thereby underlining the fact that in dealing with Africa, international partners should consider the sovereignty of African states and by extension prioritize African solutions to African problems as the major respite model out of her impasses.

Keywords: Conflict resolution, International Law, Sahel, State Fragility.

Introduction
The Sahel region, characterized by its arid climate and diverse cultures, has become a focal point for international attention due to the escalating crises in Mali and its spillover effects into neighboring countries such as Burkina Faso and Niger. The historical context of these conflicts can be traced back to a combination of factors including colonial legacies, ethnic tensions, and socio-economic challenges that have perpetuated instability. Following the coups in early 2020, there has been a marked increase in Islamic insurgency, which has further complicated the political landscape. Groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and ISIS affiliates have exploited local grievances to expand their influence, leading to widespread violence and humanitarian crises. The interplay of international law is particularly significant in this context; various actors including France, the USA, and ECOWAS have engaged with the Sahelian states through military interventions, diplomatic efforts, and development aid aimed at stabilizing the region. France's historical ties to its former colonies have led it to maintain a military presence under Operation Barkhane, while the USA has focused on counter-terrorism initiatives through programs like Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP). Meanwhile, ECOWAS has sought to mediate political disputes and promote democratic governance amidst rising authoritarianism. The impact of these dynamics extends beyond regional borders; as instability persists in the Sahel, it poses broader implications for international relations including migration pressures towards Europe and security concerns that resonate globally. Moving forward, addressing the root causes of conflict such as poverty, poor governance and social inequality are crucial for any sustainable resolution. This multifaceted crisis necessitates a coordinated international response that balances immediate security needs with long-term developmental strategies.

Empirical Review of Literature

For a proper understanding of the discussions in this write-up, there is need to clarify concepts that animate themes in this work. These concepts will include fragile states or state fragility, conflict resolution and international law. The Sahel crisis portrays this interplay of these concepts which have aided to complicate the conflicts but which can also serve as a yardstick to proffering solutions to the conflicts in the area.

Fragile state

State fragility plays a significant role in the discourse surrounding economic development. This state of fragility is linked to a variety of dysfunctions, including an inability to deliver essential services and fulfill basic needs, weak and unstable governance, persistent extreme poverty, inadequate territorial control, and a high likelihood of conflict and civil war. As noted by Bertouchi and Guerzom (2011), state fragility is especially pertinent in sub-Saharan Africa, where it seems to be prevalent. Such fragility undermines a country's potential for meaningful economic growth.

State fragility is a somewhat ambiguous concept that has been defined in various ways by different international organizations. The United Kingdom's Department for International Development describes fragile states as those in which the government is either unable or unwilling to provide essential functions to its citizens. Conversely, the World Bank defines fragile states as low-income countries that score 3.2 or lower on a scale of 1 to 6 in the country policy and institutional assessment (CPIA). Additionally, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) characterizes fragile states as those that fall within the lowest two quintiles of the CPIA, along with those that are not assigned a rating (Bertouchi and Guezom 2011).

The Sahel region exemplifies many traits associated with fragility, prompting authors to describe it as experiencing a fragility dilemma. Morten Boas (2019) contends that the underlying issues faced by donors in fragile states stem from this "fragility dilemma," which unfolds in two interconnected ways. First, while fragile states urgently require international aid, they also pose significant challenges for assistance efforts. These countries are unpredictable, extremely volatile, and susceptible to shifts in conditions. Furthermore, their limited institutional and administrative capacities restrict the volume of traditional donor aid they can manage effectively. As a result, conventional donors often lack the necessary experience and expertise regarding fragile states, particularly those like the Sahelian nations that have recently emerged as priorities on the international stage. Secondly, the established power structures and dynamics in these states can be misleading. Typically, the ruling regime is acutely aware of its importance in the international security framework and acknowledges that external actors heavily rely on it to achieve their regional security goals

In the Sahelian countries, three key factors are significant: their relative proximity to Europe, the role of the Sahel as a starting point for irregular migration or a transit route for migrants, and the perception of these nations as potential breeding grounds for global terrorism. Consequently, aid to the region continues to rise, irrespective of the fragility of these states or the policies implemented by their leaders. The flow of aid from donors to recipients often entails a transfer of power and influence from the former to the latter, a dynamic that is not always acknowledged by the international community. This increasing level of international involvement in the Sahel has resulted in a widening gap between state-centric regional security approaches and people-centric transnational security concerns (Osland and Erstad, 2020).

Consequently, the Sahelian countries are classified as some of the most fragile globally, marked by poverty and weak administrative structures. They do not possess a legitimate monopoly on the use of force and lack a robust social contract, which hampers their ability to manage extensive borders and large territories effectively. Various forms of instability are widespread, particularly in the aftermath of the 2012 crisis in Mali, which catalyzed the proliferation of violent conflicts into neighboring Burkina Faso and Niger. This was linked to escalating minority tensions and the swift rise of Jihadist insurgencies.

In this context, Country Indicators for Foreign Policy (CIFP) describe fragile states as those lacking the functional authority to ensure basic security, the institutional capability to meet the essential social needs of their citizens, and/or the political legitimacy to effectively represent their populations domestically and internationally. Similarly, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) characterizes Fragile States as a diverse category that includes failing, failed, and recovering states which are either unable or unwilling to provide security and essential services to a significant portion of their populations, raising doubts about the governments' legitimacy. It is important to recognize that the state fragility seen in the Sahel has been exacerbated by the complicity between external actors and local leadership. Countries such as Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso have come to realize that the presence of Western actors has often been hypocritical, fueling conflicts in the region for their own interests.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict is a term that encompasses a wide array of meanings across different contexts. It includes concepts such as serious disagreements, incompatibilities, fights, arguments, contests, debates, and even war. Bercovitch, a situationalist scholar, defines conflict as a situation where incompatible goals or values arise among various parties (Bercovitch, 1990, 6). The term itself represents a broad spectrum of human interactions, including hostilities that occur in international warfare. Therefore, the conventional view of conflict as merely a struggle or clash of principles falls short, as interpersonal disputes also involve a collision of various principles. The most widely accepted definition of conflict comes from Coser (1957), who describes it as a struggle between two or more individuals over values, competition for status, power, or limited resources. Furthermore, according to Wertheim, Love, Peck, and Lettlefield (1998), conflicts emerge when there are both real and perceived differences in interests—such as wants, needs, fears, and concerns—that cannot be fulfilled simultaneously. Consequently, conflicts arise when the needs and values of multiple parties are fundamentally incompatible.

Conflict is a term that encapsulates a broad range of meanings across various contexts. It encompasses notions such as serious disagreements, incompatibilities, fights, arguments, contests, debates, and even warfare. According

to Bercovitch, a scholar in situationalism, conflict is defined as a scenario where incompatible goals or values emerge among different parties (Bercovitch, 1990, 6). The term itself covers a wide array of human interactions, including hostilities that take place during international conflicts. As such, the traditional perspective of conflict as merely a struggle or clash of principles is inadequate since interpersonal disputes also involve competing principles. One of the most recognized definitions of conflict is provided by Coser (1957), who characterizes it as a struggle between two or more individuals over values, as well as competition for status, power, or scarce resources. Moreover, Wertheim, Love, Peck, and Lettlefield (1998) note that conflicts arise when there are both real and perceived discrepancies in interests—such as wants, needs, fears, and concerns—that cannot be met simultaneously. As a result, conflicts occur when the needs and values of multiple parties are inherently incompatible.

International Law

International law can be understood as a framework of legal rules, norms, and standards that govern the interactions between sovereign states and other entities recognized as international actors. In simple terms, it comprises a set of regulations and principles that oversee the relationships and conduct of sovereign states among themselves, as well as with international organizations and individuals. The concept was introduced by the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), who defined international law as a collection of rules that dictate the relations between states. This definition, however, overlooks individuals and international organizations, highlighting the evolution and expansion of the field. Consequently, international law has transformed into a rapidly evolving and intricate system of rules, along with influential, albeit not legally binding, principles, practices, and assertions, supported by increasingly advanced structures and processes.

In its broadest interpretation, international law offers normative guidelines, methods, mechanisms, and a shared conceptual language for international actors, primarily sovereign states, but increasingly for international organizations and certain individuals as well. The scope of issues encompassed by international law has expanded beyond traditional concerns related to war, peace, and diplomacy to encompass economic matters, trade, human rights, space law, environmental protection, war crimes, and the activities of international organizations. Given that the primary objective of international law is to foster peace and order among nations, the United Nations and World Trade Organization have taken on the role of overseeing these varied concerns (Sziebig, 2017).

International law is separate from international comity, which consists of legally non-binding practices that states adopt out of courtesy, such as the act of saluting the flags of foreign warships at sea. It also differs from the area of conflict of laws, or private international law, which focuses on the rules of municipal law. Thus, international law stands as an independent legal system that functions outside the legal frameworks of individual states. It is distinct from domestic legal systems in several ways. For instance, while the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, composed of representatives from approximately 190 countries, appears to operate like a legislative body, it lacks the authority to create binding laws. Its resolutions are typically of a recommendatory nature, with the exception of certain specific occasions and purposes within the UN system, such as determining the UN budget, admitting new member states, and electing judges of the International Court of Justice, where the Security Council is involved (Sziebig, 2017).

International law constitutes a unique element within the broader framework of international relations. When considering how to respond to specific international situations, states typically take relevant international laws into account. The enforcement of international law rarely relies on military intervention or economic sanctions; instead, the system is upheld through reciprocity and a sense of enlightened self-interest. States that disregard international rules risk losing credibility, which can adversely affect their future interactions with other nations. International law encompasses various domains, including legal concepts such as statutes, property law, tort law, due process, and remedies. Key subsets of international law consist of International economic law, international security law, International criminal law, International environmental law, Diplomatic law, Humanitarian law, and International human rights law.

From these various fields, it becomes evident that the sources of international law encompass conventions and treaties, customary international law, general principles of law, and judicial decisions as well as scholarly writings, as outlined in Article 38 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice. These foundational concepts manifest vividly in the ongoing and complex Sahel crisis. The interplay of these sources plays a critical role in shaping the legal frameworks and responses adopted by states and international organizations as they address the myriad challenges posed by the crisis, including issues of security, humanitarian assistance, and the promotion of human rights. The Sahel region highlights how the principles and sources of international law are not merely theoretical constructs, but rather practical tools that can influence the dynamics of international relations and contribute to efforts aimed at resolving sustained conflicts and instability.

Theoretical Framework

Constructivism is a theoretical framework that asserts that individuals and groups formulate their own subjective perceptions of reality through social interactions and collective experiences. This perspective suggests that people's comprehension of the world is influenced by the cultural, social, and historical contexts in which they exist and engage with one another. In the domain of conflict resolution, constructivism is especially significant as it highlights the need to appreciate the viewpoints of various stakeholders and to foster consensus via dialogue and negotiation (Jackson, 2009). By prioritizing understanding and communication among differing parties, this theory promotes a more nuanced approach to resolving conflicts, recognizing that social constructions of reality play a critical role in shaping relationships and outcomes.

Functionalism is a theoretical perspective that conceptualizes society as a cohesive system comprised of interrelated components that collaborate to uphold stability and order. According to this viewpoint, conflicts and tensions may emerge when these components fail to operate effectively or when they are at odds with one another. The functionalist approach is particularly valuable for uncovering the fundamental causes of conflict, as it

underscores the necessity of recognizing and tackling the underlying issues, such as economic disparities, power imbalances, or cultural divergences (Rusu, 2020). By focusing on these root causes, functionalism provides insights into the dynamics of societal interactions and the mechanisms that can lead to discord.

Critical theory, which emerged from the Frankfurt School in the mid-20th century, is an intellectual framework aimed at analyzing and critiquing societal and cultural constructs to expose and contest existing power dynamics and systems of oppression. This theory posits that conflicts commonly stem from power disparities and inequalities based on factors such as race, class, gender, or sexuality. Critical theory has significantly shaped various disciplines, including sociology, political science, and cultural studies, and continues to influence modern interpretations of conflict and social justice issues (Devetak, 2013). By focusing on these underlying power structures, critical theory helps illuminate the complex relationships between oppression and societal conflict.

Historical Review
A Summary of the Sahel Crisis

Over the past twenty years, the Sahel region has garnered significant attention due to its escalating crises. The area is grappling with a multitude of challenges that pose dilemmas for policymakers, including political instability, food insecurity, population displacement, transnational crime, and insurgencies led by jihadist groups. These issues appear to be compounded by the impacts of climate change (Boas and Strazzari, 2020). The 2012 crisis in Mali served as a catalyst, leading to the spread of violent conflict into neighboring countries such as Burkina Faso and Niger, which experienced intensified minority conflicts and a rapid rise in jihadist activities. As a result, the Sahel has emerged as a hotspot of conflict, consistently ranking among the world's most fragile regions (Osland and Erstad, 2020).

Mali served as the focal point of the violence in the Sahel region. In January 2012, Tuareg rebels formed alliances with jihadist factions to seize control of northern Mali. In March of the same year, frustrated by the state's ineffective handling of the crisis, segments of the Malian military overthrew the government in Bamako. By January 2013, in response to concerns that Mali posed a destabilizing risk to West Africa and Europe's immediate vicinity, then-French President François Hollande initiated Operation Serval. This brief military operation aimed to restore stability by eliminating the jihadist terrorist groups that, according to France, threatened Mali's territorial integrity and governance (Charbonneau, 2021)

The French intended to then pass on the baton to the UN and perhaps African partner organizations which would do the work of reconciliation and reconstruction of the Malian state and army. This French plan failed and from 2013, there has been a multiplicity of regional and international strategies and actions aimed at stabilizing Mali and by extension, the Sahel, countering and preventing violent extremism, at building the capacity of local actors, which unfortunately failed to improve the security situation or even made things worse (UNSC, 2021). Hence Jihadist armed groups surged back into action in 2017 and spread to Burkina Faso and Niger. In this state of affairs, Mali was able to organize two coups d'état in August 2020 and May

2021 respectively. These embarrassed international actors and further frustrated their plans of stabilizing Mali. In June, 2021, the culminating effects of years of the "bitter harvest of French interventionism": two coups in Mali and the demise of Chad's president, Idriss Derby made the French president to announce establishment of Operation Barkhane (the fusion of Operation Serval with Operation Epervier (in Chad since 1986), created Operation Barkhane whose area of operation covered territories of what has become known as G5 Sahel countries: Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, Niger and Mauritania) (Charbonneau, 2021). Maintain content, sources, length and reduced plagiarism to the least possible

The French aimed to hand over responsibilities to the United Nations and potentially African partner organizations, which were expected to oversee the reconciliation and reconstruction of Mali's state and military. However, this plan did not materialize, and from 2013 onward, a series of regional and international initiatives were launched to stabilize both Mali and the broader Sahel, combat violent extremism, and strengthen local capacities. Unfortunately, these efforts did not lead to an improvement in the security landscape; in fact, the situation worsened (UNSC, 2021). Consequently, jihadist groups resumed operations in 2017 and expanded their activities into Burkina Faso and Niger. Amid these conditions, Mali saw two coups d'état in August 2020 and May 2021, which not only embarrassed international stakeholders but also complicated their stabilization efforts. By June 2021, the cumulative impact of years of "French interventionism"—characterized by the two Malian coups and the passing of Chad's president, Idriss Déby—led the French president to announce the creation of Operation Barkhane. This operation combined the earlier Operation Serval with Operation Epervier, which had been active in Chad since 1986, and was designed to cover the territories of the G5 Sahel countries: Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, Niger, and Mauritania (Charbonneau, 2021).

Niger also experienced significant unrest, marked by insurgency, social turmoil, and a series of coups that swept through West Africa. On July 26, 2023, the military announced the removal of President Mohamed Bazoum from power, positioning General Abdourahamane Tchiani as the new leader of the nation. Tchiani's government proposed a maximum transition period of three years before returning authority to civilian rule. Following the coup, the National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland, led by Tchiani, has detained Bazoum. Amadou Abdramine, the Junta's spokesperson, stated on state television that the military regime had collected sufficient evidence to bring charges of high treason against the ousted president and his local and international collaborators, accusing them of jeopardizing both the internal and external security of Niger (The Guardian, 2023). The Junta justified its actions by criticizing Bazoum's management of the economy and the worsening security conditions that contributed to the country's instability. Despite the presence of foreign forces, particularly from France and the U.S., and the establishment of military bases, the government struggled to halt attacks from insurgent groups such as those affiliated with Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, and Boko Haram within Niger (Olyinka, 2023).

The question of ethnicity and the legitimacy of President Mohamed Bazoum was a prominent topic during the recent

election campaign. As a member of Niger's ethnic Arab minority, Bazoum faced criticism and accusations of foreign origins, which unsettled the military predominantly composed of larger ethnic groups. The military's discomfort with having a minority leader contributed to their actions. Additionally, the presence of numerous foreign military forces in Niger and the lack of decisive intervention by ECOWAS in previous coup situations in Guinea, Mali, and Burkina Faso further encouraged the Nigerien military to take decisive action. The situation in the Sahel remains precarious and dynamic. Judd Devermont eloquently described the complexities and challenges faced in the region, highlighting its fluid and volatile nature.

he escalating crisis in the Sahel has captured the attention of the international community. In September 2019, UN Secretary-General António Guterres cautioned that "we are losing ground in the face of violence." There was a notable surge in extremist violence in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, increasing from approximately 180 incidents in 2017 to nearly 800 violent events within the first ten months of 2019. This wave of violence has corresponded with a significant rise in the number of displaced individuals. For instance, the United Nations reported that by 2019, 486,000 people had been displaced in Burkina Faso, a stark increase from just 80,000 in the entirety of 2018. The worsening conditions in the Sahel, along with the cascading effects on regional security, migration, criminal activity, and corruption, have prompted foreign partners; including the United States, European nations, Gulf States, and various West African governments to deploy soldiers, diplomats, and development experts to address the crisis (Devermont, 2019).

The occurrences of coup d'états in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger between 2020 and 2024 have heightened the potential for conflict in the Sahel region. It is essential to analyze the political dynamics in the Sahel against the backdrop of ongoing conflicts that have persisted since 2012. Understanding these political developments is crucial for grasping the complexities of the situation in this volatile area.

Methodolody
The methodology employed in this essay primarily relies on secondary authoritative sources to analyze the complexities of the Sahelian conflict, focusing on the intertwined issues of Islamic insurgency, terrorism, and neo-colonialism. This approach involves a comprehensive review of existing literature, including academic articles, government reports, and analyses from reputable think tanks that specialize in African studies and international relations. By synthesizing insights from these sources, the essay aims to construct a nuanced understanding of how these factors have shaped internal politics within Sahelian countries and contributed to significant geopolitical shifts, such as the expulsion of French and American military presence. The analysis also examines the evolving dynamics with regional organizations like ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) and highlights the formation of the Alliance of Sahel States as a response to these challenges. This methodology is critical as it allows for an evidence-based exploration of historical contexts and contemporary developments while acknowledging the limitations inherent in secondary

research. The reliance on authoritative sources ensures that the arguments presented are grounded in credible data and expert opinions, providing a robust framework for discussing the ongoing conflicts in this strategically important region.

Results and Discussions
Politics in the Sahel amidst Ongoing Altercations
In is interesting to examine the politics within the Sahelian states in the midst of increasing hostilities. To do this, politics before and after the early 2020 coups in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso will be examined before focusing on Sahel French relations and Sahel-American relations after the coups.

The internal political landscape in the Sahel has often been overlooked by scholars when analyzing the international response to the regional crisis. In Mali, significant political obstacles hinder international efforts aimed at bolstering security in troubled areas, with the government demonstrating a lack of commitment to invest in the violence-stricken northern and central parts of the country, particularly in counter-insurgency initiatives and community development programs. Additionally, the Malian populace has lost faith in their government, perceiving that a security response does not fall within the purview of their leadership (Devermont, 2019). The ruling party, primarily based in the southern region where about 90 percent of Malians reside, frequently attributes the country's political turmoil to the agitation of those in the north. Consequently, high-ranking officials in significant ministries are often conspicuously absent from key discussions and have frequently disavowed responsibility for executing peace agreements, relegating this duty to the Ministry of Social Cohesion (Carter Center, 2019).

Prominent Malian officials faced backlash from both the opposition and the wives of soldiers, who criticized them for failing to support the military. Instead, these officials backed the formation of ethnic militias in conflict zones, which exacerbated violent confrontations, particularly between the nomadic Fulani herders and Dogon farmers in the central region. By the end of March 2019, the Dogon Self Defense Force, known as Dan Nan Ambassagou, had become fully operational and engaged in violent actions to assert its presence. While the government announced the disbandment of this militia, it lacked both the intent and the capacity to enforce this decision. This inadequate response to Mali's security challenges can be attributed to the dominance of political concerns in Bamako and southern Mali, which overshadowed the alarming developments occurring in the central and northern regions. Consequently, the government felt minimal sustained pressure to tackle insecurity, as it perceived the violence as not posing a serious threat to stability in the southern part of the country.

This absence of political resolve has allowed extremist groups to gain traction. Notably, the Union for Supporting Islam and Muslims (JNIM), a coalition of various extremist factions, along with the Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS), capitalized on governmental missteps, exacerbated their presence, and intensified community tensions to orchestrate coordinated assaults. For instance, in November 2019, the ISGS was responsible for the deaths of over 40 Malian soldiers at a military base located near the Niger border. Both the ISGS and JNIM have been active

throughout the Central Sahel, launching attacks across coastal West Africa and engaging in kidnapping operations, as exemplified by incidents in Benin in June 2019.

In contrast, Burkina Faso and Niger exhibited greater urgency, experiencing stronger domestic political pressure and a willingness from their governments to tackle violence, leading to the implementation of strict security measures against insurgencies. After disbanding the Elite Presidential Security Regiment in 2015, which accounted for about 10% of the military, Burkina Faso relied more heavily on the police and gendarmes to combat the rising extremist threat. These forces engaged in executions and mass detentions, the majority of which involved individuals from the ethnic Fulani community. This approach inadvertently drove some Fulani members to join extremist groups. Similar to the situation in Mali, the government supported local militias known as Koglweogos, which targeted Fulani individuals based on the presumption that all Fulani were sympathetic to terrorist organizations (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2019).

This situation prompted opposition groups and labor unions to protest President Rock Kabore's management of the crisis. In reaction, he reshuffled his cabinet, appointed a new chief of general staff, and invited the opposition to participate in a delayed national dialogue aimed at addressing political and security issues. Nevertheless, these political measures failed to dissuade the opposition party, Union for Progress and Change (UPC), from demanding the government's resignation, accusing it of being passive and ineffective in responding to the extremist threat (Ndiaga, 2019).

In Niger, President Mahamadou Issoufou faced increasing insecurity stemming from Nigeria, Libya, and Mali. During his tenure, the government occasionally collaborated with Malian armed groups, including the Self Defence Group of Imrad Tuareg and Allies (GATIA) and the Movement for the Salvation of Azawad (MSA), particularly in the Tillaberg and Tahoua regions of western Niger. This partnership exacerbated intercommunal tensions and proved detrimental to civilian safety.

While Niger's opposition remained relatively quiet on security issues, there was significant pressure on President Mahamadou Issoufou regarding the unclear process behind the increased foreign military presence in the country. In 2018, he outlined Niger's relationships with European security advisors and the United States, emphasizing that foreign troops should focus solely on training, equipment, and intelligence support. Since September 2019, however, he has raised concerns about the feasibility of implementing the 2015 Algiers Accord (Devermont, 2019). This situation encapsulated the internal politics of the Sahel region prior to the wave of coup d'états that swept through from 2020 to 2024. Following the coups in Mali and Burkina Faso, there was a strong commitment among the three presidents to tackle insecurity and insurgency, as they increasingly identified external influences as the primary source of instability in the region.

Dealing with Insurgency and Terrorism

In addressing the insecurity posed by the Tuareg rebels since 2012, Goita, contrary to popular notions that it is impossible to negotiate with terrorists, ended a 2015 peace deal that purportedly maintained a fragile peace in Mali's north. This peace deal was signed with separatist rebels (mainly Tuareg rebel groups) in the north in Algiers,

backed b the UN. The abrogation of the pact was according to Goita, because it had become a "business for certain actors" and both sides did not fully trust the agreement since it was perceived as "France's tool to perpetuate influence in the Sahel region" (AA News Broadcasting System (AAS), 2024). In this light the transitional government set up a committee for inter-Malian dialogue which has been welcomed as a "revolutionary ideology" by ending all that is associated or linked with France, the former colonial power. Goita in a typical Africanist orientation has by this move asserted that "Africa's peace and security shall never come from outside Africa (AA News Broadcasting System (AAS), 2024). This dimension of extending or creating a forum for inter-Malian dialogue is already a positive step towards salvaging the insurgency in the country and it is expected that big powers and regional allies rally in support of this to enable it become sustainable.

In Burkina Faso, terrorism and insurgency have not been entirely eradicated, indicating that combating these issues will take time. President Traore has pledged to confront the insurgents forcefully, dismissing the backdoor negotiations that prior leaders reportedly pursued. He believes that success in this endeavor relies on instilling discipline within state security forces, state-supported militias, and "Volunteer" forces to reduce the alleged abuses committed by them, which have historically fueled insurgent recruitment (Congressional Research Service, 2023). The president acknowledges that areas that have been under terrorist control for the last three years are now becoming accessible, with government forces and state-backed militias adopting an offensive stance. According to him, this progress can be attributed to a surge in patriotism, improvements in logistics, and better situational intelligence. Consequently, many internally displaced Burkinabe individuals have returned to their homes and farms, where they are beginning to cultivate garden crops.

In Niger, it is challenging to evaluate the extent of success in addressing security challenges, as the coup leader has been in power for less than eight months. Nonetheless, one of the primary reasons given for the coup was the urgent need to tackle the worsening security situation, with international bodies recognizing that Niger was faring better than other Sahel countries in its fight against armed groups (European Parliament Research Service, 2023). However, Western-oriented analysts have speculated that the coup may further destabilize the nation, compounding existing issues like the rise of violent jihadist groups, an increase in refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as the severe impacts of climate change. Acknowledging that donor countries and international organizations might not support a peaceful resolution to the conflicts for economic reasons, Tchiani imposed a ban on NGOs, UN agencies, and international organizations from operating in military zones on August 31, 2023. This move aims to enhance their strategic planning and reinforce policing efforts (EPRS, Normandy Index, 2023). It is believed that improved strategies and collaboration with other Sahelian nations could form a strong front against terrorism and insurgency in the region.

Alliance of the Sahel

On September 16, 2023, Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso formalized their partnership by signing the Liptako-Gourma Charter, creating a new alliance among these three

French-speaking Sahelian nations. Three months later, Niger's government leader announced on national television that the collective aim of Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso was to develop not just a military and political alliance, but also a monetary one. Thus, the alliance is set to expand beyond security concerns into both political and economic realms. Notably, these three nations, along with five others in the region, currently utilize the West African CFA Franc, a currency tied to the euro and criticized by many as a remnant of French colonialism. Ibrahim Traore emphasized that "the alliance of Sahel states is primarily a defense alliance, but it will evolve into an economic alliance and much more" (Poli, 2024).

In 2023, the finance ministers of the three countries proposed the establishment of a committee of experts to explore the formation of an economic and monetary union, arguing that this represents a historic opportunity to reclaim their monetary sovereignty by introducing a common currency known as the "Sahel." This initiative marks a significant departure from the colonial-era fiscal agreements with France that were established decades earlier. Niger and Mali further elucidated that their decision stemmed from France's ongoing antagonistic stance towards them and the inequitable nature of these agreements, which have led to considerable financial detriment for their nations. As a result, they recognized that they had no viable alternatives. Given that currency is a core instrument of sovereignty, the resolve of these nations to manage their own currency signifies a critical step toward independence. This initiative highlights the pathway that African countries must pursue to assert their sovereignty, with the Sahel region leading the way in this endeavor.

It is likely that the open challenge to French and other Western interests in the region will provoke retaliation. The history of Africa is marked by tragic reminders of the consequences faced by those who resisted Western influence. Leaders like Patrice Lumumba of the Belgian Congo (1925-1961), Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso (1949-1987), Muammar Qaddafi of Libya (1969-2011), and Eduardo Mondlane of Mozambique (1920-1969), among others, were assassinated for advocating justice and opposing Western powers that sought to impose their policies in Africa. In retrospect, the Sahelian regimes have firmly positioned themselves as adversaries in the eyes of Western nations, and to rationalize potential actions against them, these leaders may be vilified to justify their elimination.

This situation may compel colonial powers to reinforce their control over territories that have not yet overtly opposed neo-colonial influence. Consequently, European nations will need to re-evaluate their strategies concerning relations with Africa. The rising popularity of the Sahelian revolutions could potentially inspire similar movements in other African regions that are burdened by the legacy of neo-colonialism. Thus, while they may create narratives to tarnish the reputation of the military juntas, justifying Western crackdowns, neo-colonial African states will likely either implement stricter measures to prevent a similar uprising as seen in the Sahel or lessen their hold over these territories to reduce indigenous resistance to foreign influence.

Actions against France

France, the former colonial power in the now-empowered Sahelian states, has faced significant consequences from the recent coups. Captain Traore in Burkina Faso expelled the French ambassador, terminated a defense agreement, and removed several hundred French troops who had been involved in regional hostage-rescue initiatives, counter-terrorism efforts, and security collaborations. In reaction, France concluded Operation Barkhane in 2022, withdrawing more than 2,000 troops from Mali and also announcing the withdrawal of approximately 1,500 troops from Niger in 2023. This rejection of French military partnerships garnered domestic support in the context of rising anti-French sentiments throughout the Sahel region (Congressional Research Service, 2023).

French economic interests in the region have also been constrained as a result of the coups. In Niger, certain companies are viewed as symbols of the accumulation of wealth by a select few. This perception is especially true for Orano, a French firm that operates three uranium mines in the country. A few months prior to the coup, Orano had renewed its agreement with Niger to exploit the only operational one of these mines, with ambitions to tap into some of the world's largest uranium deposits by 2028. While the new regime did not prohibit uranium exports, the closure of borders hindered Orano's logistics, thereby slowing its operations (European Parliamentary Research Service, 2023). Orano's presence in Niger has fueled anti-French sentiments, as its activities continually evoke the legacy of colonialism.

It's important to highlight that prior to the coup, France had established a significant military presence in Niger. Following the coups in Burkina Faso and Mali, French forces that were withdrawn were stationed in Niger, where there were over 1,500 military personnel collaborating with the Nigerien army to combat armed groups. However, the coup leaders in Niger rejected military cooperation with France, contending that such partnerships had not been effective in restoring the government's authority in areas controlled by armed groups. Consequently, the Junta ordered the withdrawal of French troops, but did not demand the same for Belgian, German, or Italian military forces stationed in Niger.

On August 29, 2023, the coup leader revoked the diplomatic immunity of the French Ambassador and ordered his expulsion. In response, a military spokesperson indicated that French military forces were prepared to react to any escalation in tensions that could threaten French diplomatic and military facilities in Niger. Relations with France became further strained when the military regime claimed that France was deploying troops to several West African countries—Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, and Benin—in preparation for military intervention in Niger alongside ECOWAS. In a desperate response, French President Macron asserted that France did not recognize the legitimacy of the coup leaders' actions and that any redeployment of troops would only take place at the request of the ousted head of state. The deteriorating relations with Niger's leadership were ultimately underscored when France, which had initially resisted the junta's calls for its ambassador and troops to leave, agreed to recall its ambassador and withdraw French troops from Niger by the end of 2023 (European Parliamentary Research Service, 2023). Meanwhile, French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna reiterated on August 5, 2023, that France firmly supports ECOWAS's efforts to counter the coup, including

potential military intervention, despite other EU member states' lack of support for such actions. This general sentiment of resentment and the strain on ties with France ushered in a new phase of pro-Russian interest among Sahel states.

Actions against America

The conflicts in the Sahel have also influenced Niger's relations with the United States. Niger announced its decision to terminate its military cooperation agreement with the U.S., ordering the departure of 1,000 American military personnel, which has thrown the U.S. strategy in the region into disarray. The junta in Niger characterized the presence of U.S. forces as "illegal" and noted a growing skepticism among West Africans regarding the rationale for Western nations operating in Africa. This decision came following a meeting in March 2024 with a Washington delegation and the top U.S. Commander for Africa, Gen. Michael E. Langley. Niger's actions reflect a broader trend among Sahelian countries of severing ties with Western nations in favor of partnerships with Russia (The New York Times, March 17, 2024). The decision to cut military ties with the United States followed the withdrawal of French troops, the former colonial power that had led international efforts against terrorism and jihadist groups in West Africa for over a decade.

Another rationale for the call for U.S. troop withdrawal was that, following the military coup that ousted President Bazoum and installed the junta, many American personnel stationed at U.S. Air Base 201—a six-year-old, $110 million facility in the northern desert of the country—have remained inactive, with most of their drones grounded. Furthermore, due to the coup, the U.S. also suspended its security operations and development efforts in Niger. Despite the celebrations triggered by the withdrawal of U.S. troops, Hannah R. Armstrong, a peace and security analyst focused on the Sahel, noted that the cancellation of the security agreement does not equate to the outright expulsion of American military personnel as seen with the French. Instead, she suggested that it is more likely an aggressive negotiation strategy to secure greater benefits from cooperation with the U.S. This perspective is supported by remarks from a U.S. military official who stated that "there had been no immediate changes to the status of about 1,000 American military personnel stationed in the country," and that the Pentagon continues to conduct surveillance drone flights from Air Base 201 to protect U.S. troops and alert Nigerien authorities of detected imminent terrorist threats (New York Times, March 17, 2024).

While this position may imply a level of cooperation between American forces and the junta-led government, it is important to recognize that the decision in Niger was framed in terms of "sovereignty." The Nigerien public was well aware that the primary aim of U.S. policy was not to combat armed groups but to maintain influence and counter the rising presence of nations like Russia, China, and Turkey. It was noted that "there is no public evidence that American bases in Niger have proven useful." Similar to the situations in Mali and Burkina Faso, the presence of Western troops in Niger over the past decade has correlated with an increase in violence from Islamist insurgencies that they were ostensibly there to confront (Kulkarni, 2024).

The U.S. will likely need to find alternative strategies to engage with Niger, given its significant investments in the region. For example, Air Base 201, which has been operational since 2019 and covers 25 square kilometers, represents the largest construction project ever undertaken by the U.S. Air Force, costing $110 million, with annual maintenance expenses of around $30 million. This base houses 17 transport planes and a fleet of drones, including unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAVs) like the MQ-9 Reaper, making it the second-largest U.S. military installation in Africa, after the base in Djibouti. Completely abandoning such a strategically important asset while Niger leans towards Russia would likely escalate tensions between the two nations. Consequently, the West may need to devise a new "software" or approach to effectively manage its relationship with Niger.

Sahel Relations with ECOWAS

The primary victim of the recent revolutions in the Sahel region has been ECOWAS. On January 27, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger announced their decision to withdraw from the organization, despite ongoing attempts at reconciliation. This move came after they were suspended from ECOWAS following their coups, which prompted calls for the reinstatement of ousted presidents and even consideration of military intervention, particularly in Niger. Their simultaneous withdrawal, broadcast on national television, represented a significant setback for ECOWAS's goals of regional integration and its efforts to curb democratic backsliding in West Africa. ECOWAS, however, stated that it had not received formal notification of the withdrawals and maintained its stance of non-recognition for the military-led governments, asserting that coups would no longer be tolerated following the events in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger.

The juntas' failure to outline a timeline for returning to constitutional order further weakened ECOWAS's position, leading to a unity among the military leaders in support of Niger against potential ECOWAS military action. Recognizing the potential fallout of such a conflict for the region, ECOWAS chose to abandon or delay military intervention plans in Niger. The military leaders have escalated their criticism of ECOWAS, alleging that it is being swayed by external powers such as France, with whom they have severed military and other ties, instead seeking security assistance from Russia. Colonel Amadou Abdramane, spokesman for the Niger junta, articulated the reasons for their withdrawal, lamenting that after 49 years, the peoples of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger have seen ECOWAS veer away from the principles laid out by its founders and the spirit of Pan-Africanism, asserting that the organization has failed to support them in their critical battle against terrorism and insecurity (Balima and Diallo, 2023).

ECOWAS proceeded to back the West African Monetary Union in an effort to isolate the military leaders from the regional financial market and the central bank, aiming to impede socio-economic development in those nations. As a result, ECOWAS has been viewed as a mechanism of neo-colonialism, intended to undermine African nationalism and uphold Western interests in the region (Balima and Diallo, 2023).

The exit of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger from ECOWAS results in the loss of 21.4 million people from Mali, approximately 22.5 million from Burkina Faso, and over 25.25 million from Niger, based on World Bank data from 2021. This withdrawal means that ECOWAS loses access to their markets and resources, and the consequences for

the union are significant. Coastal ECOWAS nations are particularly concerned about the potential spread of jihadism and political instability from the Sahel. Moreover, other governments in the region worry about the impact on their own democracies—not only from coups but also from a rise in anti-Western populism. Guinea is already under military rule, and nations like Cameroon, Togo, and Sierra Leone also face vulnerabilities. If ECOWAS does not reform international institutions to better address African interests, its members risk associating Western countries with neo-colonialism. Therefore, it is crucial for them to accelerate the necessary reforms to ensure that the multilateral framework serves the needs of smaller, poorer nations (The Conversation, 2024).

Consequences of Sahel Politics on International Relations

The conflicts in the Sahel and the challenges posed by Western influences in the region signify a non-traditional shift in the New World Order. The historically osmotic relationship between France and its former colonies in West Africa, which persisted even after their independence, is now being questioned. These coups, which can be characterized as revolutions, continue to shape France's interactions with these nations and others still under French neo-colonial influence. Additionally, these events have significantly altered the nations' perspectives and relationships with other African blocs. The consequences of the Sahel revolutions mark a departure from the established status quo in Africa's relationship with the international community. A New World Order, originating from within Africa, is emerging. The expulsion of American forces from Niger and the widespread disdain for foreign influence in the region underscore this transformation. This decline of Western influences coincides with the growing presence of Russia, which is increasingly viewed as a more favorable ally for achieving the Sahelian aspiration of complete independence. Consequently, the conflicts in the Sahel have invigorated international relations, prompting some Western entities, such as the European Union, to reevaluate their strategies for the region and, by extension, for Africa as a whole.

In April 2021, the EU unveiled an integrated strategy for the Sahel aimed at transitioning from a predominantly military focus to more robust political engagement, emphasizing governance, human rights, and collaboration with civil society and local authorities, while still engaging in security cooperation with regional states. However, this strategy has not achieved its intended goals due to the series of coups in the Sahel. Gerald Arand, a former French diplomat, pointed out that the coup in Niger exemplified the EU's shortcomings in the region, highlighting that the French Barkhane operation not only failed to eliminate jihadist terrorism but also inadvertently strengthened jihadist groups. He urged other European countries with military presence or investments in the Sahel, including Germany, Belgium, Spain, and Italy, to reassess their strategies and presence in the area. As a result, one significant consequence of the coups in the Sahel and Central Africa, particularly following the coup in Gabon, is a re-evaluation of the EU's strategies and approaches in the Sahel, which could impact their perspectives on ECOWAS decisions, budgetary support, military collaboration, sanctions, and humanitarian assistance throughout the entire African continent.

On July 29, Joseph Borrell, the High Representative/Vice President of the EU Commission, announced that the EU does not recognize the authorities that emerged from the coups and called for the prompt restoration of constitutional order. He emphasized the EU's alignment with ECOWAS in implementing sanctions and immediately suspended budget support and all security cooperation activities. This stance was reaffirmed on August 12, when Borrell expressed the EU's backing for ECOWAS decisions and its commitment to seeking a diplomatic resolution to the crises in the Sahel, alongside the mobilization of an ECOWAS standby force and ongoing humanitarian aid from the EU. Following a meeting with Defense Ministers, Borrell reiterated their commitment to supporting African solutions to African challenges. He stated, "We are advancing with an autonomous sanctions regime to impose measures against the coup leaders, and we will assist ECOWAS in accordance with their requests under any circumstances, contingent on specific requests." Regarding potential military intervention by ECOWAS, he mentioned that the EU was open to the idea of financing the standby force (European Parliamentary Research Service, 2023). However, it is important to note that among the EU member states, only France voiced support for a potential military intervention by ECOWAS.

The EU also halted all security cooperation activities with the coup leaders. For example, the EUCAP Sahel Niger Mission, a Civilian Capacity Mission established in 2012 to enhance Niger's internal security sector and its ability to combat security threats, was suspended following the coup. Additionally, the EU military partnership mission in Niger (EUMPM Niger), designed to assist the Nigerian army in addressing terrorist threats and safeguarding the population alongside EUCAP Sahel Niger, also suspended its primary activities after the coup. This suspension of both the civilian (EUCAP Sahel Niger) and military missions (EUMPM Niger) also had repercussions for the European Peace Facility (EPF) funds (European Parliamentary Research Service, 2023).

The necessity to reassess the EU's strategic presence in the region, prompted by recent coups, was emphasized by European Commission President Von der Leyen. She stated that the aim is not to withdraw from the region but rather to reevaluate the EU's strategic involvement there and across Africa as a whole. The ongoing series of military coups is expected to contribute to prolonged instability in the Sahel, which has provided an opportunity for Russia to exert influence and gain advantages from the resulting chaos. Additionally, the situation has become a breeding ground for the rise of terrorism, which poses a direct threat to Europe's security and prosperity. Von der Leyen underscored the importance of demonstrating the same solidarity that has been shown for Ukraine, emphasizing the need for collaboration with legitimate governments and regional organizations. There is a call for the establishment of a mutually beneficial partnership that tackles common challenges faced by both Europe and Africa. To this end, she, along with Borell, aims to develop a new strategic framework as preparation for the next EU-African Union summit (European Parliamentary Research Service, 2023).

It is evident from the discussion above that the EU's strategy is based on the premise that terrorism will increase in the region due to the illegitimacy of the coup leaders, alongside the growing influence of Russia. The rising

popularity of these coup leaders and their alignment with Russia suggests a declining influence of the EU in the region and across Africa more broadly.

The UN's reaction to the coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger was clear and decisive. Members of the Security Council voiced their concerns regarding the detrimental effects of unconstitutional changes in government within the region, including a rise in terrorist activities and a worsening socio-economic situation. They condemned the coups and urged for the restoration of legitimate governments in these countries. In addition, UN Security Council members expressed their support for ECOWAS and the African Union's appeal to those involved in the coups to refrain from violence, relinquish power, and return to their military bases. However, this appeal was largely ignored, as the government in Mali called for the withdrawal of the UN peacekeeping mission, MINUSMA, and imposed restrictions on its operations. Furthermore, in early 2023, Mali expelled senior UN human rights officials, further straining relations between the UN and Mali. In Niger, UN regional agencies assessed the humanitarian impact of the ongoing crisis. On September 1, 2023, in Dakar, these agencies reported that 3.3 million people in Niger faced severe food insecurity, with over 7 million at risk of experiencing severe food insecurity as a result of rising prices and loss of livelihoods caused by the political upheaval. The UN thus urged all parties involved to facilitate the safe and unhindered movement of humanitarian workers and cautioned against halting or disrupting donor funding, as approximately 4.5 million people in Niger urgently required humanitarian assistance.

Contributions of the Study to Scientific Knowledge
The Sahel Crisis, a complex and multifaceted conflict affecting several nations in West Africa, underscores the critical importance of stakeholder engagement in resolving regional issues. The mantra of 'African solutions to African problems' emphasizes that while external support can be beneficial, it is imperative that the nations and institutions involved do not impose their agendas but rather cooperate with local leaders to ensure that solutions are contextually relevant and sustainable. This approach necessitates a commitment to dialogue and multilateralism, which fosters an environment where the sovereignty of Sahelian states is respected. Such respect is crucial for empowering local governance structures and acknowledging the intrinsic worth of African nations in addressing their own challenges. Furthermore, the findings from various studies highlight that underlying factors such as poverty, unemployment, and marginalization significantly contribute to the escalation of conflicts within this region. These socio-economic issues create fertile ground for unrest by exacerbating grievances among populations who feel excluded from political processes or economic opportunities. Therefore, any lasting solution to the Sahelian conflict must integrate strategies aimed at alleviating poverty and unemployment while promoting inclusive governance. By prioritizing these elements alongside cooperative international relations, stakeholders can work towards a more stable and prosperous Sahel region.

Conclusion and Recommendations
This study has shown that for over 15 years now, the Sahel region has been a veritable cockpit of conflict in Africa and even the world. The fragility of the constituted states, bad governance, ethnic conflicts, external military intervention, foreign exploitation of resources etc aided in impoverishing the people of this region. The rising Islamic insurgency in addition increased the misery and hopelessness that informed the illegal migrations and coups that have punctuated the region lately, thus compounding crisis in the region. The avalanche of security initiatives engineered from without failed to mitigate the issues of instability in the region. Rather it aggravated and increased instances of insecurity. Against this backdrop, the question of how to address the conflicts in the Sahel region still begs for an answer.

It is our submission that the provisions for any peace initiative in the region should focus on the internal and internal dimensions. This is because the situation in the region is caused by both internal and external influences. In addressing the internal dimensions of the crisis, Zoubir has observed that since the conflicts in Burkina Faso and Niger are actually a spill over or an extension of the crisis in Mali the solution to the crisis should commence from there. In this light and in view of the fact that foreign security initiatives did not provide a panacea to the conflict, a purely security method to addressing the conflicts in Mali will be grossly inadequate. Zoubir argues that the need to reconcile all components of Malian society is a key requirement. In this light he intimates that, the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement commonly known as the Algiers Accords brokered by neighboring Algeria in 2015 and endorsed by the Malian government and the several Tuareg factions in northern Mali, should be implemented. This document contained relevant elements which among others called for the creation of local Assemblies with broad powers and greater representation of the northern population within national institutions and the integration of former rebels in to the Malian regular forces. All the parties involved in the conflicts signed this accord indicating that there was determination to end the conflicts by the concerned. The implementation of the Accord will also cause the Tuareg rebels who are afraid to drop their weapons for fear of being killed to do so seeing they will be absorbed in the socio economic life of the nation.The accord also stressed the need for decentralization of the state which if effected will solve the regional and ethnic tensions in Mali. The envisioned state would operate on a new, democratic and participatory basis and it is expected that this would serve as a model for neighbouring Sahelian states (Zoubir, 2022).

For Antonio Guterres, conflicts, climate catastrophe, inequalities, poverty and more have become more pronounce in the world. And so any method that can solve today's challenges whether internally or externally influenced, must be hinged on the fundamental truth that no country can solve today's challenges alone. Collaboration and dialogue though consumed by competition and divisions respectively should be given a chance. In this light the one model fits all solutions understandably must be consumed in the diplomacy of investing in the search for multilateral solutions to conflicts. In the wake of the grim reality of conflicts, poverty and failing institutions, Guterres insisted that the resurrection of a new spirit of global cooperation to rebuild trust, heal divisions and place humanity on the path of peace is imperative, (Guterres, 2024). It should be noted that for this cooperation for peace

to be effective, it must be based on equality and not dictated cooperation.

From a purely Pan Africanist perspective, the way out of the conflict in the Sahel, blamed largely on external meddling in the region's affairs, is to recognize their sovereignty. France a former colonial master of many states in the conflict prone zone should allow the nations direct the affairs of their nations. The neo colonial structures set up by France's meddling in the political and security life of the constituted states of the Sahel region is now understood as the root cause of the altercations in the region. The recent coups in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger and the ensuing severing of military and security ties with France is testament of public realization that foreign influences have compounded the crisis in the region. France therefore, should accept the sovereignty of these nations and allow them chart the course out of the present impasses.

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