COLONIALITY OF CONFLICT, RESOURCE WAR AND CONTENDING GEOPOLITICAL ISSUES SURROUNDING THE 2023 NIGER COUP

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Abstract

The pervasiveness of conflict situation in the African continent, its relation to African resources and the struggle for power and influence, both internally and externally, have conditioned the nature of politics in the continent. Following the coup carried out by the Niger military against their democratically elected president in 2023 and the reactions from local and international actors, issues around the nature and reactions to conflicts in Africa and Africa's colonial legacies come to fore. This paper is a critical reflection on the situation in Niger and the geopolitical circumstances associated with it ever since. Using an analytical approach, the researcher explores the true motif of the global reactions to the conflict situation in Niger from the point of view of coloniality of conflict and resource war. Guided by the question; How does the colonial legacy of Niger shape the current crisis and what has it to do with its resources, the researcher argues that the 2023 coup in Niger and reactions to it are manifestations of coloniality of conflict. The paper also reveals the dynamics of resource war, which involves competing interests and agendas over the exploitation and distribution of natural resources in Niger, especially uranium and oil. The paper concludes with a call for a thorough decolonial turn in Africa's affairs as the solution to unnecessary conflict which exacerbates underdevelopment in the continent.

Introduction

On July 28, 2023, a group of military officers led by Gen. Abdourahamane Tchiani, the head of Niger's presidential guard, staged a coup and detained President Mohamed Bazoum, who had been elected in February 2023 in what was claimed to be a peaceful and democratic transition of power. The coup leaders announced the formation of a transitional government called the National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland (CSNP), and declared themselves the sole legitimate authority in Niger. They claimed that they acted to save the country from corruption, insecurity, and foreign interference. Blaming the rising insecurity and a lack of economic growth, they stated that the intervention was necessary to avoid "the gradual and inevitable demise" of the country[1]. These reasons, however, may not reflect the true motives and interests of the coup plotters. Some experts have suggested that other factors, such as ethnicity, the presence of foreign forces, and the weakness of regional bodies, may have also contributed to the coup in Niger.

> First, the debate over the ethnicity and legitimacy of Bazoum was an issue during the last election campaign. Bazoum is from Niger's ethnic Arab minority and has always been labelled as having foreign origins. This did not sit well within the military circle, which is predominantly composed of the larger ethnic groups…Second, the large number of foreign military troops

and bases in the country has not been well received by the military. They believe this undermines them… Third, I suggest the failure of regional organisations such as ECOWAS and the African Union to take a firm stance against military power seizures in Guinea, Burkina Faso and Mali emboldened the Nigerien military…[2]

While the international community, including the African Union, the United Nations, the European Union, the United States, and France, condemned the coup, sanctioning Niger and demanding a return to democracy, the regional bloc ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) took a leading role in trying to resolve the crisis. After failing to act upon the elapsing of the hasty seven-day ultimatum it initially gave the coup leaders to step down and reinstate Bazoum or face military intervention, ECOWAS sent a delegation to Niger to meet with the coup leaders and Bazoum, and urged them to engage in dialogue and respect the will of the people.[3] Rejecting the ultimatum, the coup leaders withdrew from ECOWAS, criticizing it for deviating from its foundational ideals and being influenced by foreign actors. Amidst concerns about the stability and security in the Sahel region following the withdrawal, along with Mali and Bukina Faso, Niger formed the Alliance of Sahel States as a new regional bloc focused on mutual defence and support, while distancing themselves from traditional Western allies like France and seeking closer ties with Russia, a key Western opposition that has been expanding its influence and presence in Africa in recent years.[4]

In light of this state of affairs, the different sides and issues that have emerged, and the central role of France, the former colonial overlord of Niger with a considerable interest and influence over the country, one cannot help but wonder to what extent this crisis is linked to coloniality and resource control. How does the colonial legacy of Niger shape the current crisis and what has it to do with its resources? What are the geopolitical implications and challenges of the 2023 coup for Niger and the region? In this paper, I argue that the 2023 coup in Niger is a manifestation of the coloniality of conflict, which refers to the enduring effects of colonialism on the political, economic, and social structures of Niger and its relations with other actors. The coup also reveals the dynamics of resource war, which involves competing interests and agendas over the exploitation and distribution of natural resources, especially uranium and oil. The coup poses significant geopolitical issues for Niger and its neighbours, as it exposes the fragility of democracy, the vulnerability to terrorism, and the influence of foreign powers, especially France, Russia, and the US in the region in particular and Africa as a whole.

Nature of Conflict and the Centrality of Resource War to Conflict Situations in Postcolonial Africa

Conflict is a state of affair in which discord and disagreement manifests in a particular situation, event or consideration. It can exist both at the individual (in terms of one's relation and internal engagement with him/herself) and group level (in terms of one's engagement with others). The interest in this work is however on the group level of conflict. In line with this, Forsyth in *Group Dynamics* considers conflict to be a situation where one or more members of the group disagrees or find discrepancies and frictions they consider unacceptable in the actions or beliefs of one or more other group members and are rejected by them.[5] Glasl captures it as incompatibilities in thinking/imagination/perception and/or feeling and/or wanting that manifests in the interaction between actors (individuals, groups,

organizations, etc.), experienced by at least one actor in dealing with the other actor (the other actors).[6]

In the realm of philosophy, conflict is a fundamental concept. It represents the clash of opposing forces, the striving of all things to become manifest. This perspective views conflict as inherent in existence itself as it is in this dynamic tension between opposing vectors, where power contends with power that a new reality dawns. Philosophers throughout history have grappled with the implications of this cosmic struggle. From Plato's ontological conception of the tripartite nature of the soul which corresponds to the tripartite nature of society, to Hobb's theorization of the brutal nature of the state of nature that inevitably gives way to social formation in the state, to Hegelian ontological dialectics and Marx's Historical Dialectics, we see littered in philosophy, a grappling with the nature of conflict and how it conditions existence at the ontological, epistemological and social levels. From a sociological standpoint, conflict emerges as a distinct category of social behaviour. It occurs when two or more parties vie for something they both desire but cannot fully possess. This "something" could be tangible resources (like land, wealth, or goods), intangible goals (such as recognition, status, or influence), or even conflicting viewpoints. Social conflict is woven into the fabric of human interactions, shaping societies and driving change. In Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) for instance, we see a commitment to deal with social conflict by his conception of society as a functioning organism. In his concept of Functionalism, one sees "the effort to impute, as rigorously as possible, to each feature, custom, or practice, its effect on the functioning of a supposedly stable, cohesive system,"[7]

Conflict theories like those of Marxist orientation, emphasize the central place of interests in understanding social conflict. This is based on the assumptions that; Humans are self-interested beings who consider what benefits them and their group before that of others. Secondly, societies operate under perpetual scarcity of resources and the need to maximize one's advantages in order to secure more resources inevitably leads to conflict. Thirdly, consequent upon the two assumptions above, conflict is pervasive and unavoidable within social groups and between social groups. With conflict and attempt to resolve it come disparity and some form of hierarchy in group dynamics. The different conflicting groups in a social setting may cooperate for their own mutual benefit, but they never stop competing for a higher hand in every situation based on their identified interests. At the heart of this competition for higher hand lies power. Power is the capability to produce effects and shape outcomes. When different powers intersect, conflict arises. Understanding conflict necessitates untangling the web of powers involved. Who holds authority? Whose interests clash? How do these forces interact? These questions guide the exploration of conflict in social, political, and even personal contexts. This is much so as conflict is not static; it involves a dynamic balancing of powers. When conflicting forces meet, they engage in a process of pushing and pulling, seeking resolution. This dialectical interplay characterizes conflict as a perpetual negotiation. The outcome depends on the context, the actors involved, and the stakes at play. Most the time, the groups with the most resources will gain or maintain power since they have the resources to support their power. This reflection on conflict, interest and power dynamics will help to shade light on the nature of conflict in Africa, especially in the postcolonial moment.

Postcolonial Africa is marked by a complicated narrative of conflicts, shaped by historical, political, and social factors. The region has seen all manner of conflicts, ranging from that of secessionist movements, ethnic violence, and struggles over power and resources, etc. These conflicts often revolve around issues of identity, boundary, citizenship,

power, and resource ownership, etc, as they are not uniform across the continent; while some countries experiencing civil wars and insurgencies, others remain relatively stable.

Boundary conflicts in postcolonial Africa are mostly caused by the colonial partitioning of Africa carried out without consultation or sensitivity to the ethnic, cultural and historical realities of the people. These colonial partitioning has mostly remained and has been the geographical bases upon which modern African states are built, causes schisms that has led to shading of blood. Examples of boundary conflicts include the Eritrea-Ethiopia war, the Bakassi peninsula dispute between Nigeria and Cameroon, and the Casamance conflict in Senegal. Identity conflicts on the other hand, are conflicts that involve the assertion and recognition of different social identities, such as ethnicity, religion, language and culture. These conflicts are often caused by a feeling of marginalization by one group, mostly a smaller group, by a larger one. The Biafra war in Nigeria, the Tuareg rebellion in Mali and Niger, the Oromo movement in Ethiopia and the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya, Niger delta militancy in Nigeria are all examples that come to mind here. The different level of violence that has been witnessed in southern Kaduna in recent years also falls into this category as the Christian minority in the state is mostly the victims. There are also conflicts that arise out of inefficient and corrupt governance in Africa. This often stem from the authoritarian and corrupt practices of African leaders, who use state power and resources to oppress and marginalize their opponents, especially ethnic minorities and civil society groups. Examples of conflict governance include the civil wars in Sudan, Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Congo and Rwanda[8].

Another form and perhaps the most all-encompassing form of conflict witnessed in Africa is Resource conflicts or wars. With impacts, such as human rights violations, environmental degradation, displacement, poverty, instability, etc, resource war is a term that refers to the use of violence or coercion to gain access to or control over natural resources, such as oil, gas, minerals, water, land, etc. Resource war can occur within or between states, and can involve state actors, non-state actors, or both. Resource war can be motivated by various factors, such as scarcity, greed, grievance, ideology, identity, etc. While particular examples of this kind of conflict abound in Africa (the Darfur conflict in Sudan, the Coltan war in Congo and the diamond wars in Sierra Leone and Angola), it can be argued that all the other conflicts experienced in Africa in one way or the other, are tied to resource conflict. For instance, while the Niger Delta crisis in Nigeria can be called an example of resource conflict, it can also be tied to corrupt governance and identity conflict. The Bakassi conflict between Nigeria and Cameroon while an issue of boundary, was intensified by the amount and quality of oil found in that region[9].

Resource war often has geopolitical implications as most of the resources for which control is battled have strategic global relevance. These resources are of tremendous value to global economy and who controls it, hence the willingness of different nations of the world to covertly and overtly resort to violence to secure them. The prevalence of conflict in Africa has often been linked to the continent's abundance in natural resources. The conflicts, from the politically motivated ones to the socially and economically motivated ones are often linked to the influence of external actors interested in these resources. Michael Ross discusses the role of natural resources in triggering and prolonging civil wars in Africa. It explains how foreign actors, such as the United States, Soviet Union, and France, have historically supported peripheral insurgencies to gain access to Africa's natural resources.[10] While Africans kill themselves, there is always an external actor at the other end fuelling the conflict with the hope of ripping the benefit in the access to strategic resources. Given this,

the question then is; to what extent is the Niger conflict and the global response to it about resources and how does coloniality of conflict explain the situation?

An Exposition of the Concept of Coloniality of Conflict

Coloniality in global relations is a term that refers to the persistence and reproduction of colonial forms of domination, violence, and exclusion in international relations and global politics. Coloniality affects different aspects of human life, such as knowledge, culture, politics, economy, and identity. It is often contrasted with decoloniality, which is a movement that seeks to challenge and transform colonial structures and epistemologies. The concept helps to throw light on the challenges of the Eurocentric assumptions and narratives in global relations and exposes the racialized, gendered, and class-based hierarchies that structure the global order. It also seeks to recover and valorise the subaltern knowledge, experiences, and practices that have been marginalized or silenced by coloniality. One of the main proponents of the concept of coloniality is Aníbal Quijano, who coined the term 'coloniality of power' in his 1989 essay "Coloniality, Modernity/Rationality". He argues that after the end of colonialism, early instruments of social domination survived and continued to shape Eurocentric forms of rationality and modernity. He identifies four interrelated domains of coloniality: control of economy, authority, gender/sexuality, and knowledge/epistemology.[11] Another influential thinker in the decolonial studies is Walter Mignolo, who develops the notion of "colonial difference" as the space where coloniality operates and where subaltern voices emerge. He also proposes the idea of "border thinking" as a way of de-linking from the colonial matrix of power and creating pluriversal alternatives to modernity. In his book *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Option,* he introduces the concept of coloniality as a hidden side of modernity that emerged from the colonization of America. Mignolo traces the historical and geographical dimensions of coloniality and its effects on knowledge, subjectivity, and economy and argue that the idea of the Western Hemisphere was a radical change in the imaginary and power structures of the modern/colonial world system. This binary distinction had important repercussions for South-North relations in the Americas, as well as for the diverse Afro-American and Latin American communities.[12]

One of the main arguments that some scholars make is that colonialism has left a lasting impact on the patterns of conflict and violence in Africa. Coloniality of conflict is a concept that refers to the enduring effects of colonialism on the patterns and dynamics of conflict and violence in the post-colonial world. Coloniality of conflict implies that colonialism was not only a historical phenomenon that ended with political independence, but also a structural and epistemological phenomenon that continues to shape the relations of power and knowledge in the contemporary world. Colonialism was not only a process of political domination and economic exploitation, but also a form of epistemic violence that imposed a certain worldview and knowledge system on the colonized peoples. This violence disrupted the indigenous forms of social organization, governance, and identity, and created new forms of difference and inequality among the colonized populations. Coloniality has the ultimate purpose of subjecting the being and resources of a people to others who not only consider themselves superior, but also depend on such scheme to maintain their real or perceived superiority. Coloniality conditions the modern international system and its apparatus of anarchic social relations as nations will lie, cheat, kill and unleash all manner of propaganda and violence to get ahead in such system. Coloniality of conflict suggests that many conflicts in the post-colonial world are rooted in the colonial legacies of artificial

boundaries, uneven development, cultural imposition, ideological domination, etc., all aimed at exploiting the former colonies[13]. This leaves one with the question; is the global reaction to the Niger coup one motivated by genuine concern or is it a manifestation of coloniality?

Coloniality of Conflict, Global Reactions and the Geopolitical Responses to the Niger Coup

Geopolitically, Niger is of strategic interest to the global powers as its location and natural resources have made it an important player in the global war on terror and a battleground for geopolitical dominance. Niger is rich in uranium, which is a strategic resource for France its former colonial masters. Its position also allows for the transmission of gas from Nigeria to Europe. The US, EU, and France have military interests in the Sahel region as their military bases there play a strategic role in protecting their interests in the region. Russia's gradual inquest in the region through the angle of military contract has also been another point of geopolitical reaction. All these have conditioned most of the reactions that followed the coup in Niger from the global community. The coup was condemned by the international community, with the US, France, EU, UN, and ECOWAS calling for a return to constitutional order. However, the coup leaders have so far refused to engage with these demands. The coup is claimed to present a challenge to democracy across West Africa, which has been bombarded with six coups in three years. While the intentions of these international actors seem all noble and good, one still wonders the reason why, even with the heavy military presence of these actors in the region, the region is still pummeled by all manner of insecurity and economic hardships. Is there any sincerity to the so-called assistance that has been offered to Niger for years or is it another enabling ground for the manifestation of coloniality?

The 2023 Niger coup and the international response can be analysed from the perspectives of coloniality of conflict. The colonial angle to the conflict becomes more manifest when one considers the history and the current situation of the country. The colonial legacy of France in Niger has shaped the political, economic, and social structures of the country, creating inequalities, dependencies, and grievances that fuel instability and conflict. For instance, the colonial borders of Niger were drawn arbitrarily by the European powers, without regard for the ethnic, cultural, and historical realities of the people. Niger is home to various groups, such as the Hausa, the Zarma-Songhai, the Tuareg, the Fulani, the Kanuri, and others, who have different identities, aspirations, and grievances. The colonial state imposed a centralized and authoritarian rule that marginalized and oppressed some groups while favouring others. This colonial state of affair also spilled over to the post-colonial realities of the country as some of the larger ethnic groups have dominated the different sections of the country, leaving peace and stability to a balance of power between the large ethnic factions. The 2023 coup in Niger may be seen as an expression of ethnic discontent and a demand for more autonomy and representation by some segments of the country. President Mohamed Bazoum, who is from the ethnic Arab minority, faced challenges regarding his legitimacy, partly due to his ethnicity. There were unfounded rumours and perceptions within the military, which is predominantly composed of larger ethnic groups like the Hausa, that he was a foreigner[14]. Such ethnic politics, along with other factors like insecurity and economic stagnation, contributed to the coup. The coup leader, General Abdourahmane Tchiani, is from the Hausa ethnic group, which is a majority in Niger. The ethnic composition of the military and its leadership, which does not reflect the broader population's diversity, creates a sense of unequal access to power and career advancement

tied to ethnicity. This presents another reason for the coup as the coup leaders and their ethnic group feared being displaced by the alleged plans for military restructuring[15].

As its former colonial master, France has a huge stake in the political, economic and social affairs of Niger, and continues to have a considerable influence in the country's affairs in the postcolonial times. With 1,500 of its troops in Niger which have now been expelled, together with an air force base servicing fighter jets and attack drones, France is also supposedly a key ally in the fight against Islamist militants in the Sahel region. France also has economic and political interests in Niger, which is a major uranium producer and a member of the Francophone community[16]. France's role and presence in Niger has been challenged by the coup leaders, who accuse France of being biased and influenced by Bazoum, the deposed president. In fact, one of the reasons given by the coup leaders and other coup leaders in the Sahel region for the coups is Frances' undue influence in the region and how it only exploits resources and does nothing significant about the insurgency and underdevelopment in the region. France initially refused the coup leaders command to withdraw the French troops from the country, strongly supporting potential armed intervention by ECOWAS. The coup leaders annulling five military agreements with France, which had granted French troops the right to operate in Niger, also sought support from Russia, engaging a delegation from the Russian private military company Wagner Group, which has been accused of human rights violations and war crimes in several African countries[17]. This move is seen as a major blow to French influence in the region, especially as the coup was supported by popular protests and assaults on the French embassy in Niger, further highlighting the anti-French sentiment that drove the coup.

The coup in Niger also caused a fresh tension in the France-U.S. alliance as the two countries were at odds over how to respond to the coup. France refused to diplomatically engage with the junta and strongly supported ECOWAS now failed threat of military intervention. The U.S. on the other hand, initially dispatched an envoy to meet with the junta leadership and held back from officially declaring the takeover a coup, insisting there's still a negotiated way to restore democracy[18]. The sincerity of France's intentions in the conflict, especially considering the haste with which they supported the use of military rather than diplomatic approach to handle the conflict, is suspicious. While Frances' reaction may seem to be out of concern for the good of the Niger people, the fact of the persistence of insecurity and underdevelopment in the region would at the very least, suggest that Frances' efforts in the region is ineffective, and the insistence of France continual stay in the country even at the cost of violence is a manifestation of the colonial arrogance that has caused and sustained most conflicts in Africa. Just like France, Nigeria and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the regional economic organization of West African States, has a huge stake in the situation in Niger. Mohamed Bazoum's overthrow marks the seventh military coup in West and Central Africa within the past four years. Nigeria's stake in the conflict in Niger and its response to it is connected to that of ECOWAS. Nigeria's interest in the region involves many factors ranging from ethnic, economic, cultural, as well as regional security concerns. The crisis affects Nigeria directly as Nigeria faces its own security challenges, particularly in the northern regions, which share strong ties with Niger. An exacerbation of the conflict in Niger can spill over to Nigeria, worsening its already precarious security situation.

The coup raises concerns about democracy in the region, putting ECOWAS under pressure to contain this democratic erosion. It is argued by some observers that the coups in the region undermine ECOWAS's power and reinforce the perception that it is a toothless

organization. In response to the events in Niger, ECOWAS, led by the Nigerian President, Bola Tinubu condemned the coup threatening sanctions and even the use of force if the deposed president is not unconditionally released and reinstated immediately. As the coup leaders failed to comply with this demand, ECOWAS imposed sanctions on Niger, including closing its borders, suspending trade, and freezing of assets. Also, all active member states of ECOWAS, except for Cape Verde, pledged to engage their armed forces in the event of an ECOWAS-led military intervention against the Nigerien junta[19]. In response to this, the military juntas in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger formally withdrew their membership in the organization, forming a Mutual Defence Pact which would mandate them to send in troops in defence of each other in case of any attack from ECOWAS. The border closure ordered by the Nigerian government following ECOWAS's declaration of sanctions on Niger backfired as it was observed to have caused more hardship and insecurity especially in the Northern region. The closure led to economic disruptions, as Lorries piled up at crossing points like Sokoto. The sanctions imposed by ECOWAS hurt civilians in the whole region more than the junta, disrupting livelihoods, exacerbating humanitarian challenges, and jeopardizing important economic projects between Niger and Nigeria[20]. The sanctions also threatened to harm bilateral cooperation between Niger and Nigeria on security and other issues as militant attacks have surged in Niger since the coup, putting the campaign against jihadist groups in jeopardy[21].

While ECOWAS and Nigeria are under pressure to act decisively to restore democracy, the stakes are high and the path forward is fraught with risks and unintended consequences. Pleas from both civilians and international actors urged ECOWAS to stand down on the use of force and embrace negotiating a peaceful transition as the wisest course of action. This is more so as using force to intervene in Niger risks a major sustained crisis for ECOWAS and Nigeria. Niger's large size and scattered population make a military campaign perilous. Nigeria also risks becoming a pawn in a proxy fight between Western countries and Russia, which has pledged to support the junta[22]. Given its economy and population, Nigeria has been a regional power in West Africa, involving itself in Niger's affairs, sometimes as a mediator, sometimes as a competitor, sometimes as a supporter of rebel groups. The coup in Niger may be seen as a challenge to Nigeria's hegemony and a threat to its security; hence its response. It has also been argued that President Tinubu's haste in threatening war against Niger was a way of currying legitimacy and international support for his government, given the controversies surrounding his election to office earlier in 2023.

At the onset of the coup, the U.S. held back from officially declaring the takeover a coup, however, as talks to restore democracy failed, the United States officially declared it a coup in October 2023, with the suspension of military and other foreign assistance programs. Niger is important to the U.S. as it has been significant to its counterterrorism operations in the region. The United States had established military bases in Niger, including drone operations, which have been crucial for monitoring and responding to terrorist activities across West Africa. However, the political upheaval in Niger complicates U.S. operations as the new ruling junta has declared U.S. presence as a violation of its sovereignty, demanded the cessation of U.S. military operations in the country. This resulted in the U.S. losing access to its bases in Niger as of March 2024[23]. The withdrawal of U.S. forces is a significant setback for American interests in the region. It not only affects the U.S.'s ability to conduct counterterrorism operations but also cedes strategic ground to other global powers like Russia and China, who may already be filling the vacuum left by the U.S. withdrawal. In April

2024, Russian military personnel arrived in Niger to train Nigerien forces and announced plans to build an air defence system, indicating a shift in Niger's international alliances.[24]

The United States and Russia's reactions to this crisis can be seen through the lens of coloniality of conflict, underscoring the interaction between local agency and external influence in shaping conflict dynamics in post-colonial regions like the Sahel. Coloniality of conflict in this instance suggests that global powers often engage with conflicts in formerly colonized regions in ways that reflect historical patterns of dominance and intervention. Historically, both the US and Russia have engaged with African nations in ways that reflect their global strategic interests, often in the context of their competition for influence during the Cold War era. The US strategy in Africa was part of a broader effort to contain Soviet influence, which led to various interventions and support for certain regimes or movements that aligned with US interests[25]. Similarly, the Soviet Union sought to expand its sphere of influence in Africa as a way to counter US dominance, supporting liberation movements and establishing relationships with socialist-oriented governments[26]. The US's approach of seeking to maintain contact with the coup leaders while emphasizing diplomatic solutions could be seen as a continuation of its historical pattern of seeking to maintain influence through engagement and aid. Russia's warning against military intervention by Ecowas and its broader efforts to develop a multipolar world order on the other hand, could be seen as part of its historical pattern of challenging Western dominance and seeking to expand its own influence. While these two great powers had no colonial stake in Africa during the colonial era, their current approach reflects coloniality. Their actions serve more to protect their interests than quell the conflict or find a sustainable solution to it.

Conclusion

The reality of coloniality in all fabrics of Africa's postcolonial existence is in no doubt. Africa's colonial legacies are intentionally woven into all structures of its modern development, from the political to the social and the economic. When African countries gained political independence, the hope was that they would dismantle these colonial structures. However, the transition from colonial exploitation to postcolonial misrule was not straightforward. Instead of inclusive institutions, many African states continued to suffer from cronyism, clientelism, dictatorship, and all forms of corrupt governance. The extent to which this conditions conflict narrative and the social structures that sustains it therefore opens an interesting vista of inquiry, and this is just what this paper has explored. The researcher explores the true motif of the global reactions and the geopolitical implications of the 2023 Niger coup through the lens of coloniality. In doing this, the researcher finds that while conflict is a natural existential condition that bedevils us as a result of our nature as social being, conflict, especially in Africa often revolves around the fight over resources. Typically experienced as civil wars and insurgencies, political violence, militant struggles, etc., these conflicts often have a colonial undertone as they are engineered or most times exacerbated by external actors, usually former colonial overlords, in their quest to have undue access to critical resources they need for their industries. Bringing the Niger situation in focus, it is argued here that while the different global reactions to it seems well intentioned, they are laced with a colonial desire to maintain control over the affairs of the country in order to continue with the status quo of exploitation and dehumanization that has kept not just Niger, but Africa in shackles and underdeveloped. The implication of this is that while Africans kill themselves in different forms of conflicts, there are often external hands with internal stooges manipulating the situation for their own selfish gains. This is reminiscent of the

colonial order in which African life and wellbeing is only as important as it facilitates control of the precious minerals and resources of the continent by the colonial masters and their African stooges. This state of affair suggests the urgent need for Africans to take the business of decoloniality seriously as coloniality underbellies a large chunk of the woes bedevilling the continent. While it will be infantile for Africans to completely lay the blame of its problems on its colonial past, it will be intellectually dishonest to not acknowledge the effects these colonial legacies have on Africa's present. Africans have wildly underutilized their sovereignty in securing their interests in our anarchic international system, and this is the major reason for the continual influence of this colonial situation in Africa's postcolonial life. It is the believe of this author that for Africa to get a hold of the conflict situations and underdevelopment in the continent, there is need for a thorough decolonial turn in Africa's affairs. The only way for this to happen is if Africans make concerted political effort to uphold its sovereignty in protecting its interests and resources from undue external incursion. Whether the recent approach of Niger and the newly formed Alliance of Sahel States is the right direction in decolonial efforts remain to be determined as decades of military misrule in the continent only teaches one to be hopeful in this situation but reasonably sceptical as to the success of this Sahelian revolution.

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