



Implications of the Diplomatic Impasse Between Francophone West African Countries and France: A Study of Mali (2017-2023)

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ABSTRACT

Background: France and francophone West African countries before, during and after colonialism established diplomatic relations in order to achieve their national interest. Following the military coup that led to the truncation of democracy in the Sahel region, the age long diplomatic relations between France and Francophone West African countries was beset by diplomatic impasse in some Francophone West African countries like Mali, Niger, Gabon, and Burkina Faso in the recent time.

Objective: The study investigated the implications of the diplomatic impasse between some Francophone West African Countries and France with specific reference to Mali.

Method: The study adopted ex-post facto research design, content analytical technique and relied on secondary data like; textbooks, journals, internet materials and other information from media commentaries on television and radio.

Result: Result showed that the diplomatic impasse between France and Mali has negative implications on Mali's economic development, military relations, and national security amongst others.

Conclusion: The study concludes that the diplomatic impasse between Mali and France, 2017 to 2023 affected Mali's economy, military relations, and national security negatively due to Mali's over dependence on France before the diplomatic impasse.

Unique contribution: this study covered the academic lacuna created by the diplomatic impasse between France and some Francophone West African countries. Thus, the subject matter has not attracted sufficient scientific inquiry by scholars and by implication created dearth of literature on the history, causes and implications of the diplomatic impasse which was covered by this study. Hopefully, this study will be very useful to Scholars and students of international studies, politics, amongst others.

Key recommendation: Development of viable economic development policies, Development of domestic base military structure in Mali and Development of indigenous-oriented security policies were recommended.

Keywords: Impasse, Diplomacy, Francophone, Security, Economy, Military, Dependency



INTRODUCTION

France over the years fought to establish diplomatic relations with francophone West African countries in general and Mali in particular for her national interest which are numerous. Thus, Afigbo (2005) asserts that Africa's story in the content of world history from very early times, or in any case from about the twelfth century B.C. can be summarized as the history of scrambles and partitions. He further opines that the three major scrambles for and partitions of the continent by extra-Africa powers could be said to have determined the texture and tapestry of African life, culture and history. Despite the fierce scramble for Africa by the Middle East and Western Europe and even among the Western Europe, France was able to secure Francophone West Africa during the Berlin conference of 1884/1885 and colonized her.

During and after colonialism, France established military bases in Mali and other Francophone West African countries, intervened militarily in most crises in Mali, established companies in Mali and other Francophone West African countries and had a number of citizens living and working in Francophone West African countries. Also France has given financial assistance (Aid) to Mali and other Francophone West African countries, helped Francophone West African countries to get military and financial assistance from regional and supranational organization, amongst other interventions in order to cement her relations with the region for her national interest. Thus, France intervened militarily in Francophone West African countries to gain political influence in the international system and protect her investments and citizens in the region.

More so, France uses the natural resources from Mali and other francophone West African countries to power her economy amongst others interest (Siradaq, 2014; Cohen, 2022; French diplomatic, 2023). On the other hand, Mali relied on foreign Aid received from France and the one collected from other supranational organizations with the influence of France which comes in many forms; financial assistance, military intervention, training of military official, amongst others to achieve national security, human and economic development (Martin, 2000). Thus, there exists a level of dependence between France and Mali for either economic or other national interest as a result of the diplomatic relations between Mali and France over the years.

In the recent time, 2017-2023, the age long diplomatic relations that led to a level of dependence between Mali and France for either economic or other national interest was bedeviled by diplomatic impasse. Thus, between 2017-2023, Mali had several military coups and the junta (Assimi Goita) was hostile to French citizens, French government and policies in Mali. The junta equally ensured a major shift of Mali's foreign relations from France to Russia. On the other hand foreign Aids to Mali were withdrawn and Mali faced some economic sanctions from France and even regional institutions like, ECOWAS and some banks such as the African Development Bank. From the foregoing, there exists academic lacuna on the diplomatic impasse between France and francophone West African countries due to the currency of the impasse. Thus, there is gap in literature on the history, causes and implications of the diplomatic impasse. Moreso, there is dearth of literature on the period under study. Thus, previous academic works on France-Mali diplomatic relations covered the history and aspects of France- francophone West African countries diplomatic relations before the diplomatic impasse but did not cover the period under



study, 2017-2023 as regards the diplomatic impasse. Hence, the implications of the diplomatic impasse between Mali and France on both parties among other discourse on the subject matter needs to be examined in order to ascertain how the diplomatic relations between Mali and France can be mended for the benefit of the two parties. It is against this backdrop that this research was set up to investigate implications of the diplomatic impasse between francophone West African countries and France with specific reference to Mali, 2017-2023.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the researcher poses and seeks to find answers to the following questions:

1. In What ways did the diplomatic impasse between Francophone West African countries and France affect Mali's economic development between, 2017-2023?
2. What is the impact of the diplomatic impasse between Francophone West African countries and France on Mali's military relations with regional and international organizations between, 2017-2023?
3. What is the impact of the diplomatic impasse between Francophone West African countries and France on Mali's national security between, 2017-2023?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Diplomacy

The concept of diplomacy has an avalanche of definitions from many scholars in the field of international studies. Thus, Obi (2006) sees diplomacy as the conduct of relations between politically independent entities through bilateral negotiations, multilateral conferences, and international organization. Padelford and Lincoln (1966) see diplomacy as the process of representation and negotiation by which states customarily deal with one another in terms of peace. Diplomacy is the application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between the governments of independent states" (Setow, 1972). Diplomacy is used primarily to reach agreements, compromises, and settlements, where government objectives conflict. It involves whether in private meetings or publicized conferences, the attempt to change the policies, actions, objectives and attitudes of other governments and their diplomats by persuasion offering rewards, exchanging concessions or making threats (Hosti, 1995). From the foregoing diplomacy imply peaceful means or interactions between and amongst states, international organizations and other actors in the internal arena. For example the cordial or peaceful relations that existed between Mali and France before the diplomatic impasse.

Diplomatic Impasse

The concept of diplomatic impasse has been deployed by various scholars in international relations, conflict resolution, and diplomacy in their work even while they may not define "diplomatic impasse" explicitly by that term. Thus, scholars have used diplomatic row, diplomatic conflict amongst others to describe diplomatic impasse. For easy understand of the concept of diplomatic impasse, it will be pertinent to look at the meaning of impasse. According to Schweinsberg, Thau and Pilluta, (2021, p. 5), an impasse is a negotiation in which one or two



parties discontinue the interaction, either because one or both parties prefer no agreement, or because they could not reach an agreement despite them benefitting from doing so. Also, Ross and Stillinger (1991, p. 12) defined impasse as “when parties are unable to create deals that satisfy their aspirations and expectations”. From the foregoing, an impasse is nothing but disagreement or misunderstanding between two or more parties. Hence diplomatic impasse means total or partial break down in a diplomatic relations. According to Schweinsberg, Thau and Pilluta (2021, p. 6), an impasse can be beneficial to one or both parties, it can also be damaging. Diplomatic impasse can damage relationships, reputations, and future value-creation opportunities (O’Connor, & Burris, 2005).

Many factors can lead to diplomatic impasse. The ranged from power struggle among nations, boundary disputes, bridge of treaty or agreement, interference in political affairs of other country, asymmetric or parasitic relations among nations, propaganda, negative impact of foreign policy, ideological difference or practice, amongst others. In the case of francophone west African countries and France, Gerits (2022) opines that the perpetrators of coups in some Francophone West African countries have, among their justifications, mentioned the overbearing influence of France and its president, Emmanuel Macron, in their affairs. The influence of France in military affairs and maintenance of dominance in business has been a key cog of the Macron agenda. Unlike other former colonial powers, France still has military bases in Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and Gabon. Lorgetie (2022) asserts that in recent years, Mali witnessed widespread of protest against France due to the perceived inadequacies of operation Barkhane. Obaji (2021) submits that Russian involvement in the 2020 Malian coup detats has been speculated as the cause of the impasse between Mali and France. Thus the speculations by scholars that Franco-Russian struggle in the Sahel is the major factor responsible for the diplomatic impasse in the Sahel region.

Overview of the Diplomatic Relations between Francophone West African Countries and France

France has deep economic, political and historical relations with Africa, dating back to the 17th century. Since the independence of the former colonial countries in Africa in the 1950s and 1960’s, France has continued to maintain its economic and political relations with its former colonies (Siradaq, 2014). Prior to the Berlin conference; European diplomats approached African rulers in the same manner as they had in the Western Hemisphere, by establishing a connection to local trade networks. In the early 1800’s, the European demand for ivory which was then often used in the production of luxury goods led many European merchants into the interior markets of Africa. European spheres of power and influence were limited to coastal Africa at this time as Europeans had only established trading posts (protected by gunboats) up to this point (Chamberlain, 1999).

According to Ibe (2005, P.124), the signing of the Makoko treaties in 1882 by France gave her control of the Congo River Basin more than anything else; this precipitated the scramble. The fear and suspicion therefore culminated in a conference in Berlin, Germany between 1884-5, otherwise called the Berlin conference. During this conference, the European powers partitioned the African continent among themselves and France received certificate of occupancy and a title



of ownership to colonize the countries referred to as francophone countries in general and Francophone West African in particular. Thus, since 1884/1885 France formally established economic relations with francophone West Africa and deployed all means to maintain the relation even after the independence of francophone West African countries. According to Martin (2000, p. 9) France maintained its relations with Africa through “cooperation agreements”, “military interventions” and “financial assistance policies” during the Cold War era. He further asserts that, the strategy of cooperation with African states had been employed by France as a continuation of its colonial policy. According to Cohen (2022, p.3), despite formal independence for French colonies in West Africa, Central Africa, and Madagascar in the 1960s, France retained a sphere of influence in these regions after decolonization; these enduring formal and informal political, economic, and personal networks among those in France and the continent with common views of world politics and shared interests in Africa were called *Françafrique*. These dynamics encouraged ruling elites in these newly independent countries to align their policy choices with those of France and the West (Cohen, 2022).

Siradaq (2014) opines that in 1939 France established its monetary system known as Franc zone to expand its economic and political influence over her then colonial countries in Africa. The CFA franc stands for two different currencies, the West African CFA franc and the Central African CFA franc. Both currencies now have a fixed exchange rate with the Euro, which is guaranteed by the French treasury. France took control of the currency and financial policies over its former colonies through its monetary system in Africa. Fourteen African countries still use the French currency. In 1994, the CFA franc was devaluated by France by 50 percent. The devaluation created serious problems in Franco-African relations and seriously damaged Franco-African monetary cooperation. The move also greatly aggravated economic instability in Francophone Africa (Martin, 2000).

From the foregoing, France has deployed all means within its reach to permanently cement its diplomatic relations with Francophone West Africa in particular and Africa at large. Thus, Several French leaders deployed different strategies, policies, treaties, aid programs and even concepts in their dealings with African countries especially their formal colonies in Africa in order to maintain monopoly of Francophone west Africa and to hold on to the ‘privileged diplomatic relations’ they established over the years. Despite the efforts to have perpetual influence on Francophone West Africa and to have monopoly over her formal colonies by maintaining their established privileged relations, for economic exploitation and political control, the relations witnessed diplomatic impasse during president Macron, 2017-2022. Gerits (2023) asserts that French West Africa has experienced five coups in the past three years. Underpinning most of these coups is hostility towards France, a former colonial authority. Mohamed Bazoum of Niger’s downfall in July 2023 comes after coups in Mali in August 2020, Chad in April 2021, Burkina Faso in September 2022 and Gabon in September 2023. The perpetrators of these coups have, among their justifications, mentioned the overbearing influence of France and its president, Emmanuel Macron, in their affairs. The influence of France in military affairs and maintenance of dominance in business has been a key cog of the Macron agenda. Unlike other former colonial powers, France still has military bases in Côte d’Ivoire, Senegal and Gabon (Gerits, 2023).



The Malian Example

Mali as one of the francophone West African countries is not an exception to the relations between France and francophone West Africa. Thus, before, during and after colonialism, France has maintained a strong diplomatic relations with Mali to the extent that France relations with Mali had influenced Mali in several aspects which include the adoption of French language as the main language which created strong connection; thus, both France and Mali are members of an international organization known as de la francophone. France presence in Mali include consulate-general of France in Bamako, French community in Mali is 6,000 (2022 estimate), Malian community in France: around 90,000 people with valid residence permit in 2019 (French diplomatic, 2023).

The first significant contact between France and Mali was in 1855 when the French erected a tent in present day machine (diplomatic, 2023). Mali was declared a French Colony, then called Soudan Francis (French Sudan) coding a semblance of economic, political or social autonomy in 1892 (the Gelardian, 2022). In the 19th century, French colonized Mali as part of its larger colonial project in Africa at the time; European powers were competing for control of African territories driven by economic interests in resources particularly gold, diamonds, and copper; as well as the desire to spread their political and cultural influence (Wooten, 1978).

During colonialism, France established a network of military bases throughout Mali and used its colonial authority to suppress resistance movements and maintain control over the local population. For example; the global cotton industry during the initial period of the 1900s was remarkably unstable. Farmers from Mali frequently yielded meager or insignificant gains from their cotton harvests. In addition, as a lucrative agricultural product, peanuts generated a greater profit margin compared with cotton. Hence, Malian farmers endeavored to oppose the endeavors of colonial authorities to mandate cotton production. Nevertheless, in the 1930s, the colonial government established the office “du Niger”, which implemented a scheme of compulsory labor and levies that forced Malian farmers to engage in cotton cultivation for overseas trade (Modou, 1995).

In the post -colonial period, France expanded its sphere of influence over Mali and other Francophone West Africa through “financial assistance policies”, “cooperation agreements” and “military interventions”. Thus, France has given much financial aid to Mali, had many cooperative agreements with Mali and intervened militarily in Mali. On the use of aid Carson (2022) asserts that French aid in Mali has increasingly taken the form of bilateral grants, but it has not consistently increased in the past 20 years. In fact, French bilateral ODA to Mali actually peaked in 2007 at \$214 million, in comparison to \$101.5 million in 2019. Since then, French aid has actually decreased significantly, following the 2020 coup d’état and current military junta’s refusal to agree to international democratic transition plans.

France equally deployed military instrument in her relations with Mali. Siradaq (2014) submits that Francis Hollande for political influence and economic gains agreed to intervene in Mali’s crises in 2013. Thus, French intervention in Mali in January 2013, known as "Operation Serval," demonstrated that France has continued to pursue its economic and strategic interests in francophone West Africa. France has had military interventions, provided training and weapon to



the Malian army; the majority of French military intervention has happened as measure of counter terrorism in the Sahel region (Chukwu, 2015). The interventions include operation Serval in 2013 and operation Barkhane in 2014. Operation Serval was a military campaign undertaken with the primary objective of removing Islamic extremists from the Northern region of Mali (BBC news, 2023). The operation ended on 15 July 2014 and was replaced by operation Barkhane, which was launched on 1st August 2014 to expand the French Military operations over a vast area of the Sahel Region and continue combating Islamist insurgents into Sahel region.

Following the several military coup between 2017-2023 by Assimi Goita, the major shifts in Mali's foreign relations and security partnerships to Russia, the hostility of the junta on French citizens and government representatives in Mali; France withdrew both financial and military assistance to Mali. Antonio (2022) argues that after nine years, President Emmanuel Macron recently announced the withdrawal of the French military contingent in Mali, therefore ending the France-led operation 'Barkhane'. He further asserts that Macron took the decision due to the major disagreements with the military junta that took power in August 2020. According to Isabelle (2023, p. 14), operation Barkhane, the French military counter- terrorism campaign which began in 2013, withdrew from its base in Mali; since then operation Barkhane has almost universally been interpreted as a massive disaster on the part of the French. How French managed to fail Mali so miserably and whether the already precarious situation of the region will improve is still up for debate (Isabelle, 2023). From the foregoing, there exist diplomatic impasse between some francophone West African countries and France, especially Mali and France.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study-was-anchored-on dependency theory. Dependency theory was propounded by Andrew, Gunder Frank in 1966. Other dependency theorists include Theotonio Dos Santos, Walter Rodney etc. "Dependency theory posit that world nations is divided into core wealthy nations and poor nations. The core wealthy nations dominate the poor nations whose main function in the system is to provide cheap labour and raw materials to the core. It held also that the benefits of this system of relationship accrue almost entirely to the rich nations, which become progressively richer and developed, while the poor nations, which continually have their surpluses drained away to the core do not advance, rather they are impoverished. According to chukwu (2015, p. 25), the trust of dependency theory is that less economically developed former colonies that technically had political independence, are still economically tied and largely dependent on developed countries (DCs). This parasitic relation provides increased wealth and power to the (DCs). It is this economic power dynamic that weakens the socio-political, economic status of the less developed countries (LDCs) in a way that exacerbate the current economic hardship and further increases power and control dynamics between LDCs and DCs (chukwu, 2015).

Consequently, the relations between France as one of the DCs and Francophone West-Africa (Mali) as LDC is asymmetric as France benefits more than Francophone West Africa (Mali). This continued asymmetry in their relationship forms basically exploitative relationship between France and francophone West Africa (Mali) and it widens the gap between France as a rich country and Francophone west Africa (Mali) as a poor country and this could account for the reason Francophone west Africa (Mali) is among the 19th poorest countries of the world. Dependency



theory is apt for this study because the study centers on how France relates with Mali and Its formal colonies in west Africa (Francophone West- Africa) . France is one of the DCs while Mali and other francophone West Africa countries are LDCs so the relationship between them is asymmetric as it favours France and made Mali and other Francophone West Africa dependent on France and underdeveloped as there are still yardstick of measuring underdevelopment in francophone West Africa. There is still neo-colonialism and exploitative relationship by France in Mali and other Francophone West African countries .The above features present in the relations between France and Mali is exactly the assertion of the dependency theory and that is why the researcher sees the theory as apt for this study.

METHOD

The study adopted Expost-Facto research design which deals with events that has taken place already. Secondary sources of data collection were adopted. Thus, relevant literature was reviewed from available sources like; textbooks, journals, internet materials and other information from media commentaries on television and radio. More so, university libraries, different public and private libraries, other government archives, and internet/websites were visited for data collection. The data collected was analysed qualitatively through content analysis. This research method was deployed in this work because the subject matter has to do with the past and present relations of France and Francophone West African countries and the proximity of areas of the study. Hence all data collected were qualitatively synthesized thoroughly to ensure coherence and objectivity.

RESULT

Research Question 1: In what ways did the diplomatic impasse between Francophone West African countries and France affect Mali's economic development?

Ways in which the Diplomatic Impasse between Francophone West African Countries and France affects Economic Development in Mali

The diplomatic impasse between France and Mali affects economic development in Mali in many ways as Economic development in Mali is driven by internal and external factors. The ways in which the Diplomatic Impasse between Francophone West African Countries and France affects Economic Development in Mali include:

Foreign Aid: Economic development in Mali is dependent on aid from France and other international organizations, Mali's export and economic production amongst others. Thus, France remains a major economic partner for Mali, as the leading direct private employer, the leader in the number of companies present in the country and the top foreign contributor to government revenue (20%) (Diplomatie, 2020). According to Van De Walle (2012, p.3) Mali has long been one of the more aid dependent countries in the world. Several different periods in the history of aid to Mali can be identified between 1970 and today. According to Carson (2022, p.10), French aid in Mali has increasingly taken the form of bilateral grants, but it has not consistently increased in the past 20 years. In fact, French bilateral ODA to Mali actually peaked in 2007 at \$214 million, in comparison to \$101.5 million in 2019. Since then, French aid has actually



decreased significantly, following the 2020 coup d'état and current military junta's refusal to agree to international democratic transition plans as shown below,

Table 1: Showing Foreign Aid and Official Development Assistance received by Mali, 2015 - 2023

YEAR	AMOUNT(MILLION US DOLLAR)	DIFFERENCE
2015	1,201.6	-
2016	1,205.1	3.5
2017	1,360.1	155
2018	1556.9	196.8
2019	1,815.9	25.9
2020	1,566.2	-249.7
2021	1,437.4	-128.8
2022	1,198.3	-239.1

Source: The Global Economy (2023)

From the table above, foreign aid and official assistance to Mali in 2015 stood at 1,201.6 (US dollars million). In 2016, it increased to 1,205.1 (3.5 m increase). In 2017 it increased to 1,360.1 (155m increase). In 2018, it increased to 1556.9 (196.8 increase), in 2019 it increased to 1815.9 (25.9 increase), in 2020 it reduced to 1566.2 (-249.7 decrease). It further reduced in 2021 to 1437.4 (-128.8 decrease) and in 2022 to 1198.3 (-239.1 reduction). The reduction in the foreign aid official development assistance received by Mali is as a result of the diplomatic impasse between France and Mali.

Mali's Export

Export implies goods sent or sold to other countries. Nations export what they produce to other countries in order to increase their national income and GDP at large. Thus, export of any country largely affects the GDP of the country. Mali before the diplomatic impasse between France and Mali has France as the major export partner. The implication is that the impact of the diplomatic impasse on Mali's overall export especially to France and French allies is inevitable as shown in the table below.

Table 4. 2: Showing Mali's Import and Export 2013 – 2023 (Billion in US Dollar)

Year	Import	Export
2013	3.81	2.34
2014	3.91	2.78
2015	3.8	2.72
2016	4.05	2.83
2017	4.29	2.9
2018	4.72	3.58
2019	5.15	3.68
2020	5.11	4.79
2021	6.3	4.86
2022	6.46	5.05
2023	8.36	5.32

Source: Aaron (2022)

From the table above, there is increase on Mali's export between, 2017-2023 as export increased from 2.9 to 5.32. Thus, from 2013-2017 when the diplomatic impasse between France and Mali have not occurred as shown in the table above, the export rate of Mali stood at 2.34, 2.78, 2.72, 2.83 and 2.9 respectively. As from 2018-2023 which is the period after the impasse, it stood at 3.58 in 2018, 3.68 in 2019, 4.79 in 2020, 4.86 in 2021, 5.05 in 2022 and 5.32 in 2023. From the foregoing there is improvement on Mali's export after the Diplomatic impasse between Mali and France. This no doubt is as a result of exporting to other countries which Mali does not export to due to her treaties with France before the diplomatic impasse.

Unemployment rate in Mali

Unemployment normally has negative impact on the economy of any nation. Unemployment rate in Mali decreased by 0.1 percentage points (-3.24%) in 2023 compared to the previous years, nevertheless, the last two years recorded a significant higher unemployment rate than the preceding years (Aaron, 2024). Mali main export is gold (72 percent of total exports). Others include: cotton, fertilizer, oil and iron man export partners is South Africa (60 percent of export) others include: Switzerland, Burkina Faso Senegal and Ivory Coast (Aaron, 2022). Unemployment rate refers to the share of the economically active population currently without work but in search of employment. The table below showed unemployment rate of Mali.

Table 4. 3: Showing Unemployment rate in Mali, 2013- 2023

Year	Unemployment rate	Year	Unemployment Rate
2013	1.54%	2019	2.41%
2014	1.49%	2020	3.53%
2015	1.412%	2021	2.29%
2016	1.37%	2022	3.09%
2017	1.41%	2023	3.01%
2018	1.62%		

Source: World Bank (2024)

From the table above, the diplomatic impasse between France and Mali affects the unemployment rate negatively. Thus, from 2013 to 2018 the unemployment remained at 1.54, 1.49%, 1.412, 1.37%, 1.41% and 1.62 respectively. But from 2018-2023 which is when the impasse reached its climax, it cliqued to 2.41% 3.53%, 52.29%, 3.09% and 3.01 percent respectively. The increase on unemployment rate is as a result of foreign companies that left Mali due to the diplomatic impasse.

Mali's GDP/GDP Growth Rate

GDP is used to measure economic development of any nation as assert by Torado and Smith (2004) that the economic developments of nations are measured by the growth in gross national product (GNP) of every country. Traditionally, development means the capacity of a national economy, whose initial economic condition has been more or less static for a long time, to generate and sustain an annual increase in its gross national product (GNP) at rates perhaps 5% to 7% or more. Development within this perspective was seen almost as purely an economic phenomenon, thus the major index of development has been a growth of income per capital or per capital income (Torado & Smith, 2004). Mali recorded an average growth rate of 3 percent over the last five years. Mali's economy has been hampered by the economic sanctions imposed by ECOWAS. However, the economy grew by 3.7 percent and 2022, up from 3.1 percent in 2021. The growth was supported by a health growth in agriculture (even though cotton production declined as a result of parasite infestations) and services average inflation spiked to 10.1 percent, up from 3.8 percent in 2021 in line with global trend (World Bank, 2024). From the foregoing, the tables below gave a clear insight on the impact of the diplomatic impasse between Mali and France on Mali's GDP.

Table4. 4: Showing Mali's GDP per Capita Income, 2013-2023

Year	GDP per capita (US\$)	Annual growth
2013	779	3.37%
2014	818	5.0%
2015	724	11.60%
2016	750	3.67%
2017	796	6.08%
2018	856	7.63%
2019	840	189%
2020	823	2.06%
2021	882	7.12%
2022	831	5.70%
2023	897	7.97%

Source: World Bank (2024)

The table above showed that there is improvement on the per capita income in Mali after the diplomatic impasse. Thus, before the diplomatic impasse from 2020, the highest per capita income of Mali was 818 in 2014 while it increased in the subsequent years during and after the impasse as in 2023, the GDP per capita income stood at 897 with annual growth rate of 7.97%. More so, the table revealed a steady increase in per capita income of Mali since after the diplomatic impasse between France and Mali. This is a positive development on Mali's economy.

Table 4.5: Mali's Growth rate of Real Gross Domestic Product (RGDP), 2018 - 2023

Year	Growth rate
2018	4.75%
2019	4.76%
2020	1.24%
2021	3.06%
2022	3.7%
2023	4.5%

Source: Aaron (2022)



Table 4.6: Real GDP Growth (GNP) Rate (%) of Francophone West Africa

Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Benin	4.9	6.2	4.4	3.9	3.1	2.9	3.8	4.6	5.0	2.7	2.1	2.5	3.7
Burkina faso	1.9	7.1	4.7	8.0	4.6	8.7	5.5	3.6	5.2	3.2	5.7	6.5	6.2
Coted'ivoire	-2.3	0.0	-1.4	-1.6	1.6	1.8	0.7	1.6	2.3	3.7	2.0	-7.3	5.9
Guinea	1.9	3.7	5.2	1.2	2.3	3.0	2.5	1.8	4.9	-0.3	1.6	4.6	5.5
Mali	-3.8	11.2	4.4	7.7	2.3	6.1	5.3	4.3	5.0	4.5	4.5	5.4	5.3
Niger	-2.6	7.4	5.3	7.7	-0.8	7.2	5.8	3.4	9.3	-1.2	5.5	4.9	11.5
Senegal	3.2	4.6	0.7	6.7	5.9	5.6	2.3	4.7	3.2	2.2	3.8	4.2	5.0
Togo	-0.9	-1.3	-1.3	4.8	2.5	1.2	3.9	2.1	2.4	3.2	3.4	3.7	4.0

Source: ADB Statistics Department (2023)

Table 4.5 above showed the GDP growth rate of Mali from 2018-2023. From the table, Mali's GDP growth rate as at 2018 stood at 4.75% and rose to 4.76% in 2019 which was insignificant. It later decreased to 1.24% in 2020. By 2021 it rose to 3.06% and increased to 3.7% in 2022 and 4.5% in 2023. Before 2017, as seen in table 4.6, Mali's GDP growth rate stood at -3.8 in 2000, and rose to 11.2 in 2001; it came down to 4.4 in 2002, increased to 7.7 in 2003, decreased to 2.3 in 2004, rose again in 2005 to 6.1. It reduced to 5.3, and 4.3 in 2006 and 2007 respectively. In 2008 it increase to 5.0 and had a decrease in 2009 to 4.5, in 2010, it maintained 4.5 and rose to 5.4 and 8.3 in 2011 and 2012 respectively. From the forgoing, is evident that Mali's economy has not had any economic development both before the diplomatic impasse between France and Mali as the GDP growth fluctuates up and down. Torado and Smith (2004) assert that economic development imply the capacity of a national economy, which initial economic condition has been more or less static for a long time to generate and sustain an annual increase in its gross national product (GNP) at rates perhaps 5% to 7% or more. Worthy of note from table 4.5 is steady increase of the GDP growth rate since the last military coup in 2020. Thus, from 2020, it increased from 1.24% to 3.06% in 2021.in 2022 it increased to 3.7% and 4.5% in 2023. The implication is that there is steady improvement on the country's GDP since after the diplomatic impasse between France and Mali.



Research question 2:

What is the impact of the diplomatic impasse between Francophone West African countries and France on Mali's military relations with regional and international organizations (ECOWAS, UN and G5 Sahel)?

Impact of the Diplomatic Impasse between Mali and France on Mali's Military Relations with Regional and International Organizations (ECOWAS, UN and G5 Sahel)

Prior to the diplomatic impasse between Mali and France, Mali's military and security outfit were composed of both foreign and domestic military personnel, equipments amongst others which shows good relations with the international organizations. More so, France in conjunction with other countries, regional and supranational institutions played significant role in complimenting and assisting the military in Mali. According to Siradaq (2014, p. 4), multilateralism has provided a number of significant opportunities for France; France agreed to strengthen francophone Africa' security system through regional and sub-regional organizations and in so doing pledged €300 million between 2010 and 2012 to francophone African states and organizations. It also agreed to train 12,000 African troops to reinforce francophone West African peacekeeping operations during that time (France Diplomatie, 2010). France has solicited financial support from the Gulf Arab states to assist during the Mali operation. It is important to underline that France has used its global power in order to strengthen its economic, political and strategic interests by cooperating with international and regional organizations during the French Mali operation. For example, on 20 December 2012, the UN authorized military operation of the ECOWAS in Mali which made the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to embark on a military mission to Mali known as "the African-lei International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA)." Following the diplomatic impasse between Mali and France, there are lots of changes on Mali's military relations with regional and international organizations (ECOWAS, UN and G5 Sahel) as shown in the table below.



Table 4.7: Showing Foreign Military Bases, Military Personnel and Military Operations in Mali before and after the Diplomatic Impasse between Mali and France.

S / N	ITEM	NAME	COUNTRY/REGIONAL/INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION	NO BEFORE	NO AFTER	COUNTRY
1	Military Base	(a) Goa military base (b) Menaka military base	France France	2	2	MALI
2	Military operation	(a) Serval (2013-2014) (b) Barklane (2014-2022) (c) AFISMA (d) UN peace keeping (e) Pan-Sahel initiative (PSI)	France France ECOWAS UN USA	5	Non	-
3	Military Personnel/ Presence	(a) Wagner group (b) French soldiers (c) US soldiers (d) UN peacekeeping (e) Ecomog soldiers (f) Chinese peacekeeping	Russia France USA Supra-national organization ECOWAS (Regional organization) China	6	1	Russia

Source: Author's compilation from (BBC.com, Wikipedia.org, African news).

Table 4.7 above showed that before the diplomatic between Mali and France, 2 foreign military bases (Geo military base and Meneka military base) own by France were stationed in Mali. After the diplomatic impasse between France and Mali, Mali now took charge of the two military bases. French troops handed back a military base in northeastern Mali; a head of a final withdrawal from the Sahel nation (Africanews, 14/06/2022). This implies that military bases in Mali are now owned by Mali and not foreign countries which is a positive change in Mali's military structure. The table also showed that 5 foreign military operations have taken place in Mali at least from 2012-2022. Thus, France conducted operation Serval and Barkhan from 2013-



2014 and 2014-2022 respectively. Also, African-led International support mission to Mali (AFISMA) was conducted by ECOWAS in 2012, Multinational Integrated Stabilization Mission to Mali (MINUSMA) was conducted by the UN, and Pan-Sahel initiative (PSI) by US. The table equally showed the presence of foreign Military Soldiers in Mali before the diplomatic impasse between France and Mali. Thus, some countries, regional and international bodies have their military soldiers carrying out military operations in Mali. For example, during the operation Serval and Barkhen by France many troops were sent to Mali by France and they remained till the occurrence of the diplomatic impasse between France and Mali. Russian soldiers (the Wagner group) are in Mali, UN peacekeeping forces, ECOWAS Peace Keeping forces and Chinese soldiers who went during MINUSMA operations remained in Mali till 2023 before they left after the diplomatic impasse between France and Mali. Thus, after the diplomatic impasse between France and Mali, only a foreign country has military personnel or presence left in Mali, the country is Russia. The reason is because Mali has closer ties with Russia as she thinks Russia will protect her interest since the West failed. Moreso, there is no foreign military operation in Mali currently and this implies that Mali's military now has control over its internal and external affairs as opposed to the time when there was no diplomatic impasse between France and Mali. Thus, Mali's military personnel are majorly soldiers from Mali as opposed to many soldiers from France, china, Russian amongst others. This is a change on the structure of Mali's military, military equipment amongst others. From the foregoing, the diplomatic impasse between France and Mali affected Mali's military relations with regional and international organizations as it led to the exit of foreign military bases, foreign military personnel, and foreign military operations by regional and international organizations amongst others.

Research question 3:

What is the impact of the diplomatic impasse between Francophone West African countries and France on Mali's national security?

Impact of the Diplomatic Impasse between Francophone West African Countries and France on Mali's National Security

Before the diplomatic impasse between Mali and France, security crises in Mali made Malian government to invite France to help in restoring Mali's national security. Patrick-Nengite (2015), asserts that Mali has emerged as a key battle ground in the Sahel's ongoing security crises grappled with a prolonged insurgency fueled by traditional terrorism, fragile state institution and ethnic conflict. Thus, Prior to the diplomatic impasse between Francophone West African countries and France, Mali entered into agreement with France to help in combating insecurity as Mali was faced with security challenges which ranged from ethnic crises, insurgencies, terrorism amongst others. Following the agreement, France deployed its military personnel, collaborated with regional and supranational organizations and had several military interventions in Mali. Hence, France legalized its military operation in Mali with three critical steps based on Mali's invitation; the first step is that France intervened militarily in Mali upon the request of the Mali government (Al Jazeera Center for Studies, 2013). The second step is that France collaborated with the international community during the Mali crisis. For instance, the UN Security Council (UNSC) with its resolution plan adopted on 20 December 2012 played a "critical role in legalizing the French military involvement in Mali. The last step is that France shared financial responsibility with the



international organizations including the Gulf African states (Al Jazeera Center for Studies, 2013).

Following the diplomatic impasse between Francophone West African countries and France, France withdrew her support in restoring security in Mali. According to Isabelle (2023, P. 6), after nine years in Mali, France has officially left; operation Barkhane, the French military counter- terrorism campaign which began in 2013, withdrew from its base in Mali in August. Since the diplomatic impasse, Mali faces many security challenges. Thus, the military junta in Mali has alienated its regional and international security partners and pursued a strategy that has exacerbated the militant Islamism violence threatening the country, thereby accelerating the security crises in Sahel (Africa Center for Strategic studies, 2023). Hence, the table below showed the number of violent events and security crises that took place in Mali during and after the diplomatic impasse between France and Mali.

Table 4.8: Showing security crises in Mali between 2017 -2023.

SN	Year	No of Violent Events (Killings by Islamic group)	Percentage (%)
1	2019	294	27.7%
2	2020	290	27.3%
3	2021	539	50.8%
4	2022	687	64.7%
5	Total	1,061	100%

Source: Author's compilation from africacenter, org.

Table 4.8 above shows security crises in Mali. From the table, there is increase in violent events that took place in Mali due to the diplomatic impasse between Mali and France. Thus, the no of violent events in 2019 stood at 294 (27.7%), reduced to 290 (27.3%) in 2020 and skyrocketed to 539(50.8%) in 2021. It further increased to 687(64.7%) in 2022. Hence, Mali witnessed total of 1,061 violent events between 2019 to 2022 which marked the period of the diplomatic face-off between France and Mali. The perpetrators of these violent attacks are JNIM (over 180 events,33%), Malian state forces and the Wagner (nearly 160 events, 29%), and IS Sahel (nearly 90 events, 15%) (ACLED, 2023). Moreso, battles and attacks have spread to new locations in northern Mali amid joint military and Wagner group operations and the resumption of hostilities with Algiers Accord signatory armed group (ACLED, 2023). Violence linked to militant Islamist group doubled since the junta seized power in 2020 and annual fatalities associated with this violence more than doubled in 2022. Civilians have borne the brunt of this violence as there were more civilians killed in Mali in every quarter of 2022 than in any previous year. Fatalities associated with violence against civilians are seven times higher in 2022 than 2021 (Africa Center for Strategic studies, 2023).



From the foregoing, the diplomatic impasse between Francophone West African countries and France led to many negative trends on Mali's national security as it increased violent events, number of deaths and led to the displacement of many citizens. Thus, more than 2.7 million people have been displaced by the escalating violence and insecurity in the Sahel region (Africa Center for Strategic studies, 2023).

DISCUSSIONS

The diplomatic impasse between Francophone West African countries and France has more negative than positive effect on Mali's economic development in the recent time, 2017-2023. Thus, table 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6 above, and the submission of scholars on the subject matter proved that the diplomatic impasse between France and francophone West African countries has negative and positive effect on Mali's economic development in the following ways or areas: foreign aid in Mali, Mali's export, unemployment rate, per capital income and gross national product (GDP).

The diplomatic impasse between Mali and France affects foreign aid in Mali, Mali's export, unemployment rate, per capita income and gross national product (GDP) because France was a major economic partner for Mali, served as the leading direct private employer, led in the number of companies present in Mali and became the top foreign contributor to government revenue (20%) (France Diplomacy, 2020). Moreso, Mali has long been one of the more aid dependent countries in the world and received most of her aid from France and supranational institutions with the influence of France (Van De Walle, 2012). This is why the diplomatic impasse led to decrease of aid in Mali and exit of French companies from Mali which increased unemployment rate and reduced GDP growth in Mali.

On a positive note, the diplomatic impasse led to Mali's dependence on other partners. Thus, Mali has attempted to diversify partnerships, and find reliable alternatives to replace France. As at 2022, the most important export partners for Mali was united Arab Emirates with a share of 74%, switzerland, 17%, Australia 5%, china 1%, turkey 1% (Aaron, 2024). The top exports of Mali in 2022 are Gold (\$7.26B), Raw cotton (\$105m), other oily seeds (\$39.7m), Rough Wood, and Iron Ore (\$12.3m). They exported mostly to united Arab Emirate (\$5.57B), Switzerland (\$1.26B), Australia (\$405M), China (\$77.5M) and Turkey (\$55.4M) (OEC, 2023). The diversification of partners no doubt led to increase of Mali's export as seen in table 4.2. From the foregoing, the diplomatic impasse has both negative and positive effect on Mali's economic development even though the negative effect is more than the positive.

The diplomatic impasse between Francophone West African countries and France has significant impact on Mali's military relations with regional and international organizations like ECOWAS, UN G5 Sahel amongst others. Table 4.7 above, the submission of scholars on the subject matter proved that the diplomatic impasse between Francophone West African countries and France affects Mali's military relations with regional and international organizations (ECOWAS, UN G5 Sahel) negatively. Thus, prior to the diplomatic impasse between Mali and France, Mali's military and security outfit were composed of military personnel, equipments, military bases and



operations from domestic, regional and international organizations like ECOWAS, UN, EU, G5 Sahel amongst others. Then it changed after the diplomatic impasse as seen in table 4.7 above to domestic security outfit. Before the impasse, France in conjunction with other countries, regional and supranational institutions played significant role in complimenting and assisting the military in Mali. After the diplomatic impasse between France and Mali, Mali now took charge of the two military bases owned by France. French troops handed back a military base in northeastern Mali; ahead of a final withdrawal from the Sahel nation (Africanews, 14/06/2022). This implies that military bases in Mali are now owned by Mali and not foreign countries which is positive change in Mali's military structure. Moreso, there is no foreign military operation in Mali currently and this implies that Mali's military now has control over its internal and external affairs as oppose to the time when there was no diplomatic impasse between Mali and France. Thus, Mali's military personnel are majorly soldiers from Mali as opposed to many soldiers from France, china Russian amongst others. This is a change on the structure of Mali's military, military equipment. The new military structure in Mali after the diplomatic impasse between Mali and France implies that the diplomatic impasse affects Mali's military relations with regional and international organizations negatively.

The diplomatic impasse between Francophone West African countries and France has negative impact on Mali's national security. Thus, the diplomatic impasse led to many security crises as seen in table 4.8 above. Thus, Mali had total of 1,061 violent events between 2019 to 2022 which marked the period of the diplomatic face-off between Mali and France. Moreso, battles and attacks have spread to new locations in northern Mali amid joint military and Wagner group operations and the resumption of hostilities with Algiers Accord signatory armed group (ACLED, 2023). Violence linked to militant Islamist group doubled since the junta seized power in 2020 and annual fatalities associated with this violence more than doubled in 2022. The impasse equally led to killing and displacement of many civilians thus, civilians have borne the brunt of violence in Mali as there were more civilians killed in Mali in every quarter of 2022 than in any previous year. Fatalities associated with violence against civilians are seven times higher in 2022 than 2021, more than 2.7 million people have been displaced by the escalating violence and insecurity in the Sahel region (Africa Center for Strategic studies, 2023).

From the foregoing, over dependence on foreign military assistance led to the deteriorated security situation in Mali after the diplomatic impasse between Mali and France. Thus, national security was the major reason behind the invitation of France by Malian government before the diplomatic impasse which resulted to operation Serval and Barkhane in 2013 and 2014 respectively. Since then France has done much including cooperation and involvement of international organization to combat insecurity. Following the impasse between Mali and France, most foreign military assistance, personnel, intelligence equipments and bases were withdrawn as seen in table 4.7. This is the major reason for the negative impact of the diplomatic impasse between Mali and France on Mali's national security.



CONCLUSION

The study concludes that diplomatic impasse between Mali and France, 2017 to 2023 has negative implications on Mali's economy, military structure and relations, national security amongst others due to Mali's over dependence on France in her diplomatic relations before the diplomatic impasse. Thus after the diplomatic impasse between France and Mali, Mali witnessed economic hardship, high insecurity and high migration due to the exit of foreign companies, military personnel and operations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

1. **Development of viable economic development policies:** Malian government should develop economic policies that will not allow one major economic partner as it was with France before the diplomatic impasse to avoid over dependence on one country. There should be more economic partnership with the global south, NATO and Warsaw pact. This will help Mali to improve her economy by exporting to many countries with her own price, having many industries from other countries to promote employment amongst others.
2. **Development of domestic base military structure in Mali:** Malian government should adopt a military structure that allow more indigenous military personnel, local military bases and military arms and reduce foreign military interventions and assistance. This will help to improve Mali's military personnel; technologies etc and give Mali's security outfit total control over the security of Mali.
3. **Development of indigenous-oriented security policies:** Malian government should develop and implement security policies that will encourage domestic military operations and increase the number of security personnel made up of indigenes that will replace the foreign operations and personnel that helped in combating insecurity before the diplomatic impasse in order to improve national security.

Ethical clearance

Ethical consent was sought and obtained from the participants used in this study. They were made to understand that the exercise was purely for academic purposes, and their participation was voluntary.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.



Authors' Contributions.

Chukwu, K. E. and Alozie, C. C. conceived the study, including the design. We collated the data, handled the analysis and interpretation. All authors have critically reviewed and approved the final draft, and are responsible for the content and similarity index of the manuscript.

Availability of data and materials.

The datasets on which conclusions were made for this study are available on reasonable request.

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