



Neo-colonial Dynamics in Africa: A Comparative Study of China, Russia, and France

An Assessment of Economic, Political, Cultural, and Military
Engagement as a Form of Neo-colonialism

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Abstract

Even after the colonial legacy in Africa terminated, the time of exploitation and dependency was not over yet, but rather continues under the term known as neo-colonialism. Neo-colonialism can be observed all over the world, especially in Africa, where neo-colonialism through economic dependency, cultural hegemony, political influence, and military engagement contributes to the perpetuation of poverty, inequality, and underdevelopment in the neo-colonized countries while benefiting the neocolonial powers and their elite allies. This paper examines these neo-colonial dynamics with three case studies of three distinct examples — China, France, and Russia — with different aims, strategies, and historical backgrounds concerning colonialism. Their dynamics in Africa will be analyzed using the theoretical concept of neo-colonialism, which was constructed out of existing literature, and examined with a comparative analysis using qualitative and quantitative data. This paper concludes that all three countries practice different sorts of neo-colonialism in Africa, emphasizing their engagement on varying features like economic, military, cultural, or political means. This comparative study contributes to the existing research on neo-colonial practices by extensively analyzing each case and delivering new insight by comparing these.

Keywords: Neo-colonialism, France, Russia, China, comparative analysis

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"Neo-colonialism is also the worst form of imperialism.
For those who practice it, it means power without responsibility
and for those who suffer from it, it means exploitation without redress."
(Nkrumah, 1965, p. xi)

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Abbreviations

BRI- Belt and Road Initiative

UN- United Nations

CAR- Central African Republic

PRC henceforward referred to as China- Peoples Republic of China

PMSC- Private Military Security Company

WG- Wagner Group

DSR- Digital Silk Road

GDP- Gross Domestic Product

ACSS- Africa Center for Strategic Studies

MNCs- Multinational Corporations

IMF- International Monetary Fund

CFA- Communauté Financière Africaine

FDI- Foreign Direct Investments

1. Introduction

In the period from 1945 to 1960, most African states gained independence from their colonial ruler, and one might assume that with the decolonization process during the mid-20th century, the devastating period of colonialism would have terminated (Nkrumah, 1965, p. 24). Nevertheless, while formal colonialism officially ended, its legacy continued to manifest through complex networks of economic influence, political intervention, cultural hegemony, and military presence. In recent years, the presence of global powers on the African continent, such as China, Russia, and France, has reignited discussions about neo-colonial dynamics in Africa, raising questions about their engagements' motivations, strategies, and implications. Africa as a continent is becoming more important due to its economic and geopolitical potential it holds. By 2050, Africa's population is projected to reach around 2.5 billion, comprising over 25% of the world's population. Even if population growth slows thereafter, Africa will continue to be the largest source of global population growth, potentially reaching close to 40% of the world's population by the end of the century. This demographic shift has the potential to reshape both the continent and the world at large. Hence, involvement in these dynamics becomes increasingly important for major powers to influence the continent, which might alter the world order and develop new world powers and economic effects. (Stanley, 2023, p. 16)

While neo-colonialism has been widely discussed and differently defined, Kwame Nkrumah, a pan-African activist who published one of the first academic contributions to the subject of neo-colonialism, defined it as, "(...) the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality, its economic system and political policy are directed from outside." (Nkrumah, 1965, p.ix) Hence, this influence can be subtle, a form of soft power directed through cultural engagement and education, or military presence, securing interests more obviously and openly. However, the aims differ from the neo-colonizer's political engagement and geopolitical advantages to mere resource exploitation and economic gain (Ebeh et al., 2019, p. 57). Nevertheless, the human right to self-determination, enshrined in the United Nations (UN) Charter, is supposed to protect people from human rights violations that accompany neo-colonial dynamics, but this is not the only human right that is being violated by these practices (UN, 1945). Neo-colonial dynamics influence the political landscape in Africa; they often include support for authoritarian regimes and hindrances in democratic processes. These practices fundamentally violate the human rights of African citizens, including their rights to free expression, association, and participation in governance. The vast economic influence, exploitation, dependency, and unequal trade relations that accompany neo-colonialist practices are intensifying poverty and inequality in African

countries, significantly impacting individuals' economic rights. Moreover, through cultural hegemony, foreign beliefs and values are being imposed on African communities, undermining their rights and identities. The neo-colonial dynamics are being reinforced through economic, political, and social mechanisms that prioritize the interests of the neocolonial powers and their local collaborators over the well-being of the broader population and, hence, fundamentally endanger the guarantee of human rights. These increasingly occurring neo-colonial dynamics on the African continent will be analyzed with a theoretical concept of neo-colonialism that has been constructed out of synthesizing previous literature and which will be applied to the three cases of China, Russia, and France. The three cases will then be compared to identify similarities and differences in their approaches. The following research question will guide this comparative study:

"In which ways are China, Russia, and France engaging in neocolonial practices in Africa, and what are the key differences and similarities in their approaches and impacts on the continent's economic, political, cultural, and military landscape?"

This comparative study seeks to analyze the neo-colonial dynamics in Africa by comparing the three cases of China's, Russia's, and France's engagement, three major actors with distinct historical legacies, geopolitical interests, and approaches to engagement. By examining their economic investments, political influence, cultural hegemony, military presence, and security cooperation on the continent, this study aims to provide insights into the evolving patterns and strategies of neo-colonialism and their impact on Africa.

1.1 Overview of the Thesis Structure

In the following, the thesis will first present the previous research on neo-colonial dynamics in Africa by China, Russia, and France. It will also shed light on the existing literature regarding the theoretical concept of neo-colonialism and how it has been defined and used. Subsequently, the research gap is identified and followed by the introduction of the theoretical framework, neo-colonialism, and how it has been developed into operationalization and hence used for the analysis. The main features of neo-colonialism that have been identified for this thesis will be presented and explained, consisting of political influence, economic dependency, cultural hegemony, and military presence. This section is followed by a brief outline of the study's method, material, case selection, and limitations. Thereafter, the analysis, a comparison of the findings of each case, and a conclusion will be presented to complete this thesis.

2. Previous Research

The following section will critically review the existing literature surrounding the thesis topic of neocolonial practices in Africa by China, Russia, and France. This will include a background and overview of neo-colonialism and, consequently, colonialism. Furthermore, this section will examine what findings have been discovered by previous research regarding neo-colonial practices by the different cases that have been selected for this thesis, if there are any comparisons between them, and if so, what conclusions have been drawn from that. Finishing with possible gaps in the previous research, this chapter will provide the fundament for the content of this thesis.

2.1 Theoretical Framework of Neo-colonialism

Looking at the literature surrounding the concept of neo-colonialism, it is worth noting that even though there is a notable amount of it, most of it includes colonialism and its evolution into post- and then neo-colonialism. Nevertheless, it is an integral part of neo-colonialism since it would not exist in this form without its original shape, colonialism. One of the most significant and first contributions to this field was made by Kwame Nkrumah, a Pan-Africanist leader and Ghana's first president, who extensively wrote about neo-colonialism, with its primary focus on Africa, covering the economic trade aspect of neo-colonialism and the cultural aspect. He, among others who contributed to the understanding neo-colonialism (especially economic neo-colonialism) covered the resource exploitation neo-colonialism brings with it and hence the economic potential Africa holds (Nkrumah, 1964; Sartre, 1964; Crozier, 1964; Lenin, 2010). While Nkrumah focuses on the African continent and considers various powers that exploit the region, the prominent francophone anti-colonial figure Sartre focuses on France's involvement, with a special focus on its colonial past. The image that is drawn with these contributions to the concept of neo-colonialism is mainly in a direct connection to colonialism and appears to be a fluid transition between colonialism, post-colonialism, and neo-colonialism and, therefore, affects only former colonial powers such as France and England (Martin, 1958; Vajrushev, 1974). However, the more recently the literature was written, the more flexible the definition of neo-colonialism becomes. Neo-colonialism is no longer automatically assumed to be a follow-up of colonialism and can also be newly established (Uzoigwe, 2019; Haag, 2011; Rahaman et al., 2017). The definitions found in the existing

literature deliver, when combined, a valuable framework for my thesis since countries such as Russia and China without colonialism can still be neo-colonialism practitioners.

2.2 Neocolonialism by China in Africa

Since China announced its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which is exceedingly focused on investment in Africa and regions with barely developed infrastructure, China's activities on the continent have caught international attention. There is a vast amount of literature existing covering China's engagements in Africa, mainly focusing on the Digital Silk Road (DSI) and accompanied by the introduction of the term digital neo-colonialism (Gravett, 2022; Gravett, 2023; Wright, 2021; Deych, 2019). While there is comparably more literature on digital neo-colonialism, meaning the political, economic, and cultural aspects of neo-colonialism in Africa, there is also a considerable amount of scholars that have focused on China's increasing military presence on the continent, also analyzing the dynamics under the framework of potential neo-colonialism, which it is mainly identified as (Pant & Haidar, 2017; Ebeh & Aleke, 2019; Ramani, 2022; Mlambo, 2022). While the educational and cultural form of neo-colonialism is instead mentioned briefly, the effects of China's economic investment (especially the consequences of loans and its aftermath, possible advantages and disadvantages) are being examined considerably (Kwasi, 2019; Adeniran et al., 2021; Abdulsalam et al., 2021).

2.3 Neocolonialism by Russia in Africa

Since Russia's activities in Africa are of a rather recent nature, the existing literature on the subject is still in its infancy. Nevertheless, there is a growing number of scholars focusing on Russia's military presence in Africa with its proxy actors, Private Military Security Companies (PMSCs), such as the Wagner Group (WG). While the minority of the literature goes into the neo-colonial aspect of this involvement, the focus remains on the legality behind PMSC and their committed human rights violations (Mussa & Dubianskij, 2023; Siegle, 2021). However, the few scholars that focus on Russia's presence in Africa as a form of neo-colonialism deliver a decent starting point with promising arguments that can be further developed and serve as a groundwork for this thesis (Engels, 2023; Doboš & Purton, 2024). A considerable amount of literature examines the tactical alliances behind Russia's involvement, considering the economic dimension as well as the security and geopolitical motivations Russia possibly holds (Ferragamo, 2023; Hayrapetyan & Kučera, 2022; Paczyńska, 2020). The literature regarding

Russia's cultural and educational influence in Africa is quite rare. This topic and resource exploitation are covered but in the course of other focus topics, which leaves room to develop and examine it further.

2.4 Neocolonialism by France in Africa

Since France's colonial legacy was critically reviewed and studied by scholars, there is a natural transition in the literature regarding neo-colonialism echoing the findings of colonialism. Most findings develop the concept of neo-colonialism from the starting point of the Communauté Financière Africaine (CFA) zone, which is a French currency (a remnant of the colonial era) that France now uses to exercise economic control over its former colonies (Taylor, 2019; Bovcon, 2013; Ethogo et al., 2022). Taylor delivers here a valuable exploration of the neo-colonial practices France is exercising with the help of the CFA franc, providing information and findings for numerous scholars by framing and defining France as a neo-colonizer (Taylor, 2019). As mentioned above, the first concepts of neo-colonialism were developed out of colonialism and also focused on countries that were colonizers. The literature regarding France is compared to the two other cases of China and Russia, relatively old but still valuable since the structures mainly remained the same; although focusing more on the original definition of neo-colonialism and the utilization of, in colonial times established structures, that is taken advantage of nowadays (Martin, 1985). Vallin studies France's military presence in Africa in his paper and delivers thereby, since he is almost the only one dedicating an entire study solely to this aspect of neo-colonialism, a necessary material for this thesis (Vallin, 2015).

2.5 Research Gap and Concluding Remarks

Despite there being no set definition of neo-colonialism, the existing literature draws an extensive image of this term, delivering a foundation for this thesis to define neo-colonialism and assemble a detailed image of the different features. Nevertheless, most definitions of neo-colonialism do not outline all its aspects and exclude important keywords such as exploitation or cultural influence. These terms are often stated but not further explained, and it is assumed that the reader knows about the meaning, which makes it challenging to translate them into operationalization words for a theoretical concept, leaving the task of defining them properly for this paper to cover. Previous research shows that scholars have identified neo-colonial dynamics in the three selected countries, China, Russia, and France in Africa. The existing

literature examines different aspects of these neo-colonial practices, which sets the stage for this thesis topic and still leaves room for further investigation since there is barely any literature that covers all the different features of neo-colonialism extensively, as this paper aims to do. There are only a few papers that include comparisons; Haag compares France's and Great Britain's neo-colonial practices in Africa, whereas both have a colonial history in the region (Haag, 2011). Another paper that includes a comparison was contributed by Ramani, who examines China's and Russia's activities in Africa but lays a focus on military and economic rivalry, and this comparison has not been analyzed with the concept of neo-colonialism (Ramani, 2022). Therefore, there is an existing gap, leaving room to examine the potential neo-colonial practices further and explore to what extent they are actually taking place, whereby all different aspects, economic, military, political, and cultural dynamics, are taken into consideration, not only some of them. Due to the fact that there is no existing comparison between the three countries, it seems like something interesting to explore while still using the existing literature but examining the extent of neo-colonialism further and more extensively than it has been done before.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Conceptualization of Neocolonialism

Even though the concept of neo-colonialism can be observed in various occurrences and has existed as such since the 1950s, there is no general definition or unambiguous origin of the term. Nevertheless, Jean-Paul Sartre was among the first to write about it. He examined the colonial legacy from the French point of view due to France having been one of the leading colonialist powers in Africa and the transmission from colonialism to neo-colonialism, which emerged in the context of decolonization efforts in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Sartre gives an overview of the continuation of colonial structures after countries officially gained their independence, which is, for the first time, labeled as neo-colonialism. Essential for him, too, are the power dynamics and structures in post-colonial societies, influenced through economic and political means by the Western countries and, hence, their former colonial powers. However, Sartre's work contributes substantially to the first characterization of neo-colonialism as a form of indirect power and exploitation of former colonies that officially gained their nominal independence, thereby persisting beyond the end of official colonial rule (Sartre, 1964). Alternatively, others see the origin of neo-colonialism through a Leninist lens and as a form of Western capitalism, where it is defined as domination over former colonies and with its focus and dependency on the natural resources and workforce to maintain the imperialist power and

maximal capitalism of Western states. Lenin portrays this in "Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism" from 1916, where he analyzes imperialism as the climax of capitalism, which, in his understanding, entails elements that can be nowadays identified as neo-colonialism (Crozier, 1964; Lenin, 1916). Some scholars even defined neo-colonialism as capitalism reinforced by imperialist powers through colonial policies, mainly to amplify profits and maintain the political, economic, ideological, and military influence they were used to from the colonial legacy (Vajrushev, 1974).

One of the first official definitions of neo-colonialism was proposed by the 1961 All African People's Conference in the Resolution on Neo-colonialism: "The survival of colonial system despite formal recognition of political independence in emerging countries, which become the victims of an indirect and subtle form of domination by political, economic, social, military or technical means" (Martin, 105, pp. 190-191).

The concept of neo-colonialism gained international attention through Kwame Nkrumah, who substantially contributed to the discourse on neo-colonialism. He conceptualized neo-colonialism as a continuation of colonial economic, political, and cultural domination through indirect means after formal independence. He argues that neo-colonialism continues the exploitation of African resources and labor for the benefit of Western powers and highlights with his extensive analysis the economic exploitation through Multinational Corporations (MNCs) that are controlling critical sectors of African economies such as agriculture, mining, and finance; hence, emphasizing the importance of economic sovereignty to become free from neo-colonial structures (Nkrumah, 1964, pp. 10-14). Political domination is also a vital aspect, as Western countries manipulate political processes and support authoritarian regimes to serve their interests. What was, in contrast to other scholars, especially important for Nkrumah when conceptualizing neo-colonialism was his vision of Pan-Africanism. In order to overcome neo-colonialist structures, he argued for the United States of Africa to resist external power and consolidate political power (Nkrumah, 1964, p. 253). Similar to the Leninist understanding and also the first ideas about neo-colonialism by Sartre, Nkrumah's definition of it is also a concept that derives from colonialism and takes advantage of the recently decolonized nations, though assigning power to advantageous leaders to achieve political, economic, and social benefits. While the aim remains the same as in colonialist times, the dependence on the former colony and the economic exploitation, the difference is that the dominated countries are officially independent (Martin, 1985, p. 191).

As already mentioned, the mechanisms that are being employed to pursue neo-colonialist practices are more subtle than during colonialism. Depending on the specific case and definition

of neo-colonialism, the means can include controlling the prices of goods and specific conditions on economic trade resources in order to maintain the monopoly of commercial interests. They are also controlling capital, such as regulating currencies with exposed foreign exchange rates or integrating certain countries into the French-France Zone or the British Sterling Area (Crozier, 1964; Nkrumah, 1964, pp. 220-221). Other mechanisms influence foreign policy-making through controlling administrative sectors or the direct employment of civil servants in leading positions to guarantee influence for neo-colonial power. Furthermore, military agreements are being made to retain power over the political dynamics, which can also involve assistance in coups, military interventions, and technical or security assistance (Haag, 2011, p.10). Occasionally, scholars such as Nkrumah argue that a form of neo-colonialism can take place through cultural and social influences like educational systems. The education of the African elite, as well as the deployment of cultural ambassadors, can hence be a crucial tool in imposing Western values and beliefs, where the colonial background and indoctrinated inferiority complex of many countries delivers a prosperous ground for neo-colonial practices (Nkrumah, 1964, p. 35; Martin, 1985, p. 2002). Even though the concept of neo-colonialism was first solely seen as an emergence from colonialism, this is not the case anymore. Throughout the latter decades of the 20th century, countries like China, Russia, and the USA that had not been colonizers in these specific regions in the first place started to gain economic domination over certain areas in Africa. This form of neo-colonialism is also crucial and forms the starting point for the analysis of the neo-colonial structure established by China and Russia in Africa, which have not colonized the region before. Moreover, not only single states but also the actions of transnational companies and cooperation programs of international organizations can be defined as neo-colonialist practices (Haag, 2011, p.12).

3.2 Conceptual Framework

Despite no official definition of the term neo-colonialism, it is possible to assemble one from the existing understanding of neo-colonialism and create a conceptual framework of the central mechanism that constitutes it and consequently can be found in the practices of China, Russia, and France. Generally, neo-colonialism is a form of power and dependency practiced by a former colonial power or other powerful nations over an ex-colony or other less stable states like some African countries. By doing so, the neo-colonizer is exercising its power in order to gain economic advantages, often through financial or military means and by supporting favorable elites, whereas the country is, despite the dependency, domination, and exploitation, independent (Martin, 1985, pp. 190-192). According to the definition just mentioned, several

criteria can be identified that imply the presence of neo-colonialism, which will be used in analyzing China, Russia, and France to identify neocolonial practices and function as the operationalization. Since neo-colonialism suggests a combination of different features of dependency, exploitation, influence, and domination, at least some of the criteria must be present in the practice of the neo-colonial power in Africa to be identified as neo-colonialism. Hence, each of the cases that have been chosen, France, Russia, and China, will be analyzed, and this framework will be applied, looking for these features that identify their presence as neo-colonialism. A table with the operational terms was created for further clarity, which shows the exact aims, targets, agents, and means/practices of each identified neo-colonial feature (see 3.3).

3.2.1 Economic Dependency and Exploitation

One central aspect of economic engagement in terms of neo-colonial practices is the exploitation of natural resources. Exploitation refers to the use of something (in the case of resource exploitation, natural resources) where the party providing it arguably gets an unfairly small share in return, leaving one entity with an advantage and the other at a disadvantage, hence exploiting the latter. Even though Africa is a continent that is tremendously rich with natural resources, e.g., bearing coal reserves lasting for centuries and an estimated two billion metric tons of iron, most of the resources are being used for development and interests overseas. In contrast, the industrial development of the continent still lags. The gross income per capita roughly reaches \$ 2,000 in Africa, making it the poorest continent in the world despite its resources (Nkrumah, 1964, pp. 1-5; International Monetary Fund (IMF), 2023). This is being explained by a lot of scholars through the deployment of neo-colonialism, since trade agreements, monopolistic access for specific companies, import and export prices determined by the neo-colonial ruler that is being made in favor of them, exploiting and dominating economic potential of Africa (Uzoigwe, 2019, pp. 71-73; Haag, 2011, p. 13).

Furthermore, economic engagement, more specifically resource exploitation, can be seen through the possession of mining rights and the retaining of control over major industries and companies in exchange for, e.g., military advice or other needs a country has and cannot provide for itself (Engels, 2023, p.178; Doboš & Burton, 2023, p. 9). This usually arises out of a desperate need for political stability and the inability to find sustainable solutions to dwelling conflicts, which is being taken advantage of by the service-providing country. At the same time, the exploited government sees its aim to stay in power and receive stability as the priority and

the extraction of resources as the lesser evil. Often, the lack of alternative trading partners is also the reason for returning to unfavorable deals, where the existence of an inconvenient deal is better than none.

Even though some deals might be perceived as providing mutual benefits, the influence of military advice can lead to securing access to natural resources for others in the long term, resulting in underdevelopment and perpetuating a cycle of resource exploitation. (Goodison, 2019, p. 39)

The profit that the neo-colonialist country is gaining from the natural resources is significantly more extensive than what they give in exchange for military advice. However, as already said, the regime in power is in desperate need of it, and at the same time, it also secures their survival; they still make these deals, and the population of these countries is barely gaining any benefit. Even if they experience a more stable political surrounding through the help of military advisors, the potential development they were being deprived of by the loss of natural resources that are now going to the external trade partner leaves them in a more disadvantaged position. (Doboš & Burton, 2023, p. 9)

One example of these unequal conditions that clearly favor one entity can be seen in the diamond industry. A rough diamond from Africa, which costs about \$40 per carat for the country buying it, undergoes polishing and cutting in Europe, a service that Africa cannot yet provide of this quality. As a result, the price jumps to around \$900 per carat when it reaches the customer. A similar situation is observed in Zimbabwe's tobacco production. With the export of raw tobacco, they earn \$650 million annually. However, experts suggest that if Zimbabwe were to process the tobacco into cigarettes before exporting, it could potentially earn ten times more, around \$6.5 billion, a significant portion of what is currently earned by Western trade partners. (Rahaman et al., 2017, p. 11)

This resource exploitation leads to another central aspect of economic neo-colonialism; the economic dependency that is being created through the unequal trade relations and financial aid that are resulting in a cycle of underdevelopment and dependency on external markets and neo-colonial powers, which can also create debt dependency and loss (if even gained after the decolonization) of economic sovereignty (Martin, 1985, pp. 207-208). This is reinforced through international and transnational organizations, i.e., the IMF, which is being used as a tool to practice influence and control (Chabal, 1986, p. 31).

3.2.2 Political Influence

This feature of neo-colonialism, political influence ties closely into the previous criteria of economic dependency and exploitation since countries' economic relations are necessarily tied to politics between them. Political influence from the neo-colonial ruler towards the targeting state can appear in various forms. It can reach from subtle diplomatic advisors to disinformation campaigns, monetary or military support of certain political leaders to the backing of violent change of governments and civil wars (Doboš & Burton, 2023, p. 8; Campbell, 1975, p. 37). As mentioned in the previous mechanism of neo-colonialism, economic dependency shapes a specific political dependency and influence simultaneously since economic agreements require a degree of political exchange and foreign relations. Often, the political advisors or other various forms of political influence are part of agreements that tie into economic exploitation; a political advisor is being offered to a government in exchange for achieving control over a mining industry (Doboš & Burton, 2023, p. 17). Political influence is practiced to reach specific goals and benefits for the oppressor, like economic gains or certain alliances a specific government can provide. The support of certain political leaders, elites, and political opponents can be of advantage when a country needs allies not only in trade relations but also on the international stage, like in UN elections (Uzoigwe, 2019, p. 73; Nkrumah, 1964, p. 69, 109; Martin, 1985).

3.2.3 Cultural Hegemony

Regarding the neo-colonial mechanism of cultural influence and hegemony, it is essential to note that this aspect is heavily biased through the colonial period that already imposed foreign values (mainly Western), habits, and cultural aspects. Since numerous former colonies had the language, education, and cultural values of the colonial ruler imposed for years, some of the neo-colonizers who were former colonizers in the region, like France, could take advantage of that (Iwara, 2015, p. 121). One major aspect of this feature is the influence of foreign actors through education or so-called "cultural ambassadors" who infiltrate young minds with foreign values and beliefs (Nkrumah in Schramm, 2000, p. 340). This, in turn, can result in political influence, as the outcomes of elections, due to citizens influenced through media campaigns, education, or these "cultural ambassadors." Here, the distinction between political and cultural influence becomes blurry since ideological and cultural means in the forms of slander campaigns and intrigues similarly affect a country's politics (Nkrumah, 1964, p. 246). Another

frequently used tool is media sources like movies and newspapers controlled by the neo-colonialist powers, which can influence people and convey specific values (Rahaman et al., 2017, p. 12). Language is also a fundamental aspect that plays into the neo-colonial influences. This is significantly easier if, like in the case of France, the language is already established through the colonial period and can later be used to create a sense of elite favor deals with the country that shares the language because it is simply easier practically. Language is not just a means of communication but also a carrier of culture, values, and worldviews. The widespread use of colonial languages can reinforce cultural hegemony, where the dominant culture imposes its norms and perspectives on others. This can lead to the erasure or devaluation of indigenous languages and knowledge systems (Etogho et al., 2022, p. 836). Concluding, it can be said that the utilization of soft powers like national friendships, cultural exchange programs and academic scholarship programs have become an essential part of practicing neo-colonialism (Wang, 2023).

3.2.4 Military Presence and Security Cooperation

The last aspect that will be used as part of the theoretical framework to analyze neo-colonial dynamics is the presence of military personnel and corporations of the oppressor. Similar to the last features of neocolonialism, the military presence is also closely connected to the others since security personnel is often offered in exchange for certain economic benefits. More precisely, this feature of neo-colonialism can include defense agreements, the provision of security advisors or companies as protection of favorable leaders and governments, or even support in military interventions (Martin, 1986, p. 194). This is often tied to political or economic influence since it can support coups or secure elections and is often a service in exchange for economic advantages. The military presence can also be a form of neo-colonialism, when cooperation with the oppressor country is being protected, favorable leaders or access to natural resources (Haag, 2011, p. 14). It may be essential to add that the characteristics of military presence and security cooperation also include technical assistance the neo-colonizer provides to create dependency and influence (Martin, 1986, pp. 202-204).

3.3 Operationalization Table

Main Feature	Means and practices	Aims	Targets	Agents
Economic influence/dependency	Unequal trade deals, controlling of currency and monopoly of deciding conditions of trade deals and prices of goods	Resource exploitation and economic gain (through e.g. labor creation to support the newly created industries)	MNCs that are controlling key sectors of the African economy	Economy of neo-colonialist country or IMF, the World Bank, MNCs, that are being dominated by Western countries
Political influence	Military/diplomatic advisors, disinformation campaigns and trade deals as a way to keep someone in power, influence through AI-technologies	Control of political dynamics, the remaining in power of favorable elites	Populations, high government officials, dictators or elites	Neo-colonialist country
Cultural hegemony	Indoctrinated inferiority complex, education of the African elite and media, cultural relationships	Influence of thoughts, culture and positive image of neo-colonizer to increase access to trade deals	Population of target country/media and educational institutions	Neo-colonialist country
Military presence	Military agreements, military bases in strategic positions	Power over politics, controlling military coups, secure geopolitical power and control over economic agreements	Military of African country and security corporations, working with the government and high officials	Either the military of the neo-colonialist country itself or a proxy actor like PMSCs

4. Method and Material

This chapter is dedicated to the research design of this thesis, a comparative study, and the choice of material, its credibility, and the way it has been analyzed. Furthermore, it explains the choice of cases and discusses the study's limitations and possible challenges.

4.1 Case Selection

Selecting China, France, and Russia as cases for the comparative analysis of African neo-colonial dynamics has various reasons and advantages. First of all, the three countries have very diverse histories regarding colonialism. While France has an extensive colonial history in Africa that is still lingering and determining their presence in the region nowadays, Russia and China have not set foot in Africa, at least not when speaking in colonial terms. (Martin, 1985, p. 203) While Russia already had strategic interests during the Cold War in Africa, China has rapidly increased its presence in the last decades (Ferragamo, 2023; Mlambo, 2022, p.1). These different colonial legacies make it interesting to look into how colonial factors shape the contemporary neo-colonial dynamics. Another aspect that motivates the case selection is that their current engagement seems to vary from each other since their geopolitical motivations are diverse, determined through not only their different locations but also their diverse political regimes, allies, and strategies. China's involvement is often framed by its economic expansion and resource quest.

In contrast, Russia's involvement reflects its geopolitical ambitions, which aim to create a power balance with the West and are primarily pursued through PMSCs (Adeniran et al., 2021, p. 39; Engels, 2023, p. 148). In contrast to both, France is influenced by its colonial past and tries to maintain its influence through already-established mechanisms (Martin, 1985, p. 190). By having three different cases, with possibly different forms of neo-colonialism, this comparative study aims to draw an image of the complexity of the neo-colonial dynamics, shedding light on the geopolitical motivations, contemporary engagement, and the influence of colonial times that can be shown on these three cases.

4.2 Material and its Analysis

The material chosen for this thesis mainly consists of academic articles and, thereby, secondary material. This choice makes sense since academic articles regarding neo-colonial dynamics by

Russia, China, and France in Africa include in-depth analysis of this issue and already incorporate theoretical frameworks regarding neo-colonialism and thereby similar to the theory used in this work, making it easier to build upon the findings and develop them further. Since a comparative analysis involves synthesizing and comparing intel from multiple sources to identify patterns, trends, or differences, academic articles serve as valuable sources of existing knowledge, allowing the synthetizations of diverse perspectives and integration of them into the analysis. (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. 232)

This also takes advantage of most of these papers' peer-review process, ensuring validity. These secondary sources are materials written sometime after the incident that is being examined and include information that has been analyzed, interpreted, and processed to develop it further. (Halperin & Heath, 2020, pp. 275-276)

Regarding this topic, the material consists of journal articles and books written by social scientists. Nevertheless, one has to be careful with the reliability and confirmation bias of the material since there is always a bias in confirmation as well as in the selection of the articles (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. 278). Hence, it was taken great care in the collection process of the material for this thesis to include various scholars for each topic, preferably coming from different backgrounds and looking for alternative views on a specific case.

The material is being analyzed using a comparative case study, mainly analyzing secondary data through qualitative means but also integrating quantitative analysis.

By combining qualitative and quantitative methods, one can receive a comprehensive understanding of neocolonial dynamics in Africa by merging subjective insights with objective numerical data. This approach allows for validation, triangulation (using multiple methods to enhance credibility and reliability), and consideration of multiple perspectives, enriching the analysis while ensuring careful interpretation of statistical findings within their contextual framework. (Halperin & Heath, 2020, p. 376; Weber, 1990, pp. 72-76)

4.3 Limitations of the Study

It is worth mentioning that there are some limitations to the study that could not have been avoided due to the scope and resources given. First, the cases that have been chosen can indeed be compared on the grounds of the neo-colonial dynamics. However, the timeframes of when that happens are not clearly defined, nor are they all in the exact same period, because the focus is the comparison of practices, not the context of the time. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind since it potentially plays a role in the means and tactics used and varies with the time it

takes place. However, the study tries to take approximately the same time frame, which reaches from the turn of the century to today; whereas France's practices already happened before, China's involvement in the continent started around 2010 extensively, and Russia was increasingly observed from 2016 on (Ferragamo, 2023; Ramani, 2022; Haag, 2011). The theoretical framework developed considers four features of neo-colonialism, but additional aspects, such as the exploitation of agricultural sectors, could provide further insight into neo-colonial strategies. However, due to the scope of this paper, these aspects were not included. (Deych, 2019, p.73; Ramani, 2022, p.9) Due to limitations in data collection and insufficient secondary data on individual African countries, this paper examines neo-colonial dynamics across the entire African continent instead of focusing on specific states associated with France, Russia, and China. While a more precise analysis could have been achieved by studying individual African states, the examination of the continent allows for sufficient data analysis and still provides a comprehensive study of neo-colonial dynamics.

5. Comparative Analysis

5.1 China's Neocolonial Practices: The BRI in Africa

5.1.1 Economic Dependency and Exploitation: The DSR

As it shines through in the title of China's neocolonial practices, one primary tool for China's economic engagement in Africa is the BRI or, more precisely, the DSR. Whereas the BRI is a foreign policy initiative launched by China in 2013, which aims to gain more international influence through infrastructure investments, the DSR, as part of it, is aimed at increasing digital connectivity and simultaneously enhancing China's technological power. (Gravett, 2022, p. 47; Ramani, 2022, p. 5)

Even Chinese experts have expressed their hope that these significant investments will facilitate the relocation of labor-intensive industrial enterprises to the African continent. Meanwhile, in several less developed countries, this infrastructural sector needs to be built from the ground up. Despite African countries seeing this as an opportunity for jobs and economic development, it mainly benefits China's economic growth (Deych, 2019, p. 71). Nevertheless, some scholars demonstrate that foreign investment by China in Africa shows a unidirectional causality connection between the BRI and the economic development in the host country, even though it is fragile and only applies to energy and infrastructure sectors. However, it disproves that the benefit is only on one side (Abdulsalam et al., 2021, p.13).

However, the proven economic growth does not consider the debt African countries have to take, especially in the long-term advantage for China, which did not take any loans and solely

gains from these deals (Adeniran et al., 2021, p. 41). However, it cannot be concluded if China's infrastructural investment in Africa is benefitting the African economy, and scholars seem not to have a settling answer here (Mlambo, 2022, p. 1). Hence, this identifies as a form of economic exploitation because the advantage for one country is bigger, and even though Africa has a choice in accepting these investments, they are eager for economic growth and also need basic infrastructure, which is also a part of it and which convinces to enter into these deals (Mlambo, 2022, p. 2).

Nonetheless, this is only the tip of the iceberg; most African countries welcome the BRI openly, and since then, China has become the largest investor in infrastructural projects on the African continent. Under the name of the DSR, China has invested vastly in the technological infrastructure in Africa, using developing countries as laboratories to improve their AI surveillance technology since they get access to the newest technology, while in return, China is allowed to use the data collected from it. China is advertising these investments by promising the gross domestic product (GDP) to grow significantly and to help estimate weather changes and, thereby, the challenges African countries face in developing their economy. In 2018, the Zimbabwean government signed an agreement to deploy a new Chinese startup to practice their algorithm regarding facial recognition, which China declared a win-win deal. (Gravett, 2023, p. 1; Wright, 2021, p. 9)

Most of the 2G and 3G networks in Africa and 70% of the 4G network were built by one of the biggest Chinese telecommunication companies, Huawei, which is closely connected to the Chinese government. Huawei also signed a \$175 million deal with Kenya to build a smart city, which promises economic growth for China and dependency and debt for Kenya. (Wright, 2021, p. 4)

ZTE, another partly state-owned Chinese company, provides the Ethiopian government with telecommunication infrastructure. The H3C, also a Chinese telecommunication company, builds the infrastructure for the Nigerian airport, and the list continues. (Gravett, 2023, p. 2; Wright, 2021, p. 8) Even though some Chinese companies seem to be solely driven by market forces and not controlled by the Chinese government, they all have more or less visible ties to the Chinese regime. Most African countries now rely on Chinese technology and investments, and without the DSR, they would have been unable to develop and utilize those technologies themselves and would not have been able to stem the costs accompanying them. But the part that identifies this whole concept of the DSR in Africa as a form of economic neocolonialism is the fact that most African countries, now enjoying Chinese technologies and investments, had to pay a price for this. In order to afford the technology they desperately need for further

development in their countries and to keep up with the competition, they take loans, which makes them almost entirely dependent on China for its services. (Gravett, 2022, p. 49) Many African countries that welcomed the technology now owe China a financial obligation. The annual loan granted to Africa by China in 2016 was over \$ 30,000 million, and currently, 20% of Africa's external debt is owed to China, with some countries like Djibouti owing over 80% of its external debt to China (Kwasi in Mlambo, 2022, p. 12). This also creates a dependency and might result in a debt crisis, whereas 18 sub-Saharan countries have a debt-GDP ratio of over 50% (Kwasi, 2019). This dependency and debt relationship corresponds with the characteristics of neo-colonial dynamics mentioned in the framework above. Hence, investments in Chinese organizations benefit the Chinese economy more than African development, even though that is the cover under which, for example, the BRI is being advertised. As mentioned earlier, there might be a correlation between African development and Chinese investment, even though it is somewhat fragile. (Ebeh & Aleke, 2019, p. 60; Ramani, 2022, p. 7)

China's foreign direct investment (FDI) in less developed African countries creates a power imbalance fueled by economic dependency and a form of exploitation because China is extracting data from the exported technology. Even though this is part of the deal and the African countries have a choice to take it or not, they are in high need of technology since they, as a continent, are lagging far behind regarding their internet infrastructure. This puts them in a position where they are more likely to accept these deals since they could never afford deals with European countries, and the loans they are taking, as well as the delivery of data to China from this technology, is a comparably easy commitment.

China's trade relations with Africa are fulfilling another aspect of neo-colonialism. Many African countries like Ghana, Kenya, Angola, and South Africa accepted the yuan as their trading currency, which was supposed to make trade with China easier, increase Africa's attractiveness as a partner for China, and thus be beneficial for Africa as it seeks the economic growth it hopes to achieve with this trade relationship. Nevertheless, it also results in the African states suffering deficits and imbalances in their trade agreement with China. On top of that, 52% of Chinese foreign aid goes to Africa, mostly to resource-rich countries, to ensure cooperation and trade agreements. (Deych, 2019, pp. 66-68) In conclusion, it is highly difficult and almost impossible for Africa to repay these debts, resulting in dependency, power imbalances, and exploitation by China.

5.1.2 Political Influence: Exporting Authoritarianism

Regarding China's political influence over the African continent, the tool for it is already established with the economic influence, mainly the investments as part of the DSR described in the previous section. Since, as mentioned, China is offering its surveillance AI technology to various African countries, it also delivers a tool to control citizens. Hence, China is exporting its digital authoritarianism, teaching African governments to surveil its citizens, helping them to identify threats to the "public order" and track political opposition.

This is advantageous for China since it is easier for them to have relations with other authoritarian regimes than to face critique as they do for their treatment of political opponents from democratic European states. Indeed, it is also advantageous for African states to use this technology. However, it is also advantageous to encourage like-minded political regimes or influence beliefs and political opinions in general, a trait of neo-colonialism.

China is openly advertising the practice of internet sovereignty to African governments, meaning that the government is entirely controlling the internet and is, whenever necessary or of advantage, able to shut it down entirely. This has already been observed in various African countries, such as Eritrea, Ethiopia, Chad, Togo, and Uganda (to name only a few). Accordingly, these countries' relatively authoritarian governments have ordered internet shutdowns during elections, blocked accounts of political opponents, and prevented bloggers from documenting violence the government committed and posting it online. (Gravett, 2023, p. 3) As it becomes apparent, China is not only actively teaching its tools to oppress citizens and export its authoritarianism but is also able to heavily influence African regimes in wrongdoing by providing tools and knowledge to do so. Furthermore, by making African countries heavily reliant on Chinese infrastructure utensils, China also advances the ability to influence African governments through dependency, since once used to the technology, they need the supplies, expertise, and guidance from China. (Wright, 2019, p. 4) The Chinese dominance over the infrastructure and internet in Africa leads to control over African governments and political dynamics, which is also created by encouraging authoritarianism and hence creating a closer relationship with similarly structured China. This power becomes only reinforced through financial obligations and economic dependency (Gravett, 2023, p. 3).

According to various scholars, China's strategy of spreading its authoritarianism and questionable internet governance through investment programs and exported infrastructure has profound implications for African sovereignty. By equipping African governments with surveillance technologies, China is enabling them to silence political opponents, thereby

exerting indirect political influence and supporting illiberal regimes. This is a clear manifestation of neo-colonialism, with China holding the power to influence governance and potentially undermining the sovereignty of African nations.

5.1.3 Cultural Hegemony

In addition to the two already mentioned aspects of neo-colonial dynamics China is practicing in Africa, China has a certain degree of cultural influence, even though not in the same dimension as the other two. As part of development aid from the Chinese government, China has funded education programs all over the African continent. This includes financial support for education, scholarships for African students to study in China, building schools and lavatories in Africa, and sending Chinese teachers to Africa. Part of the China-Africa educational program is also the promotion and teaching of the Chinese language in Africa and the grant of a university education for African students in China. (Deych, 2019, p.76) Accompanying the promotion of the Chinese language, Chinese history and culture are also heavily endorsed and part of the education that China sponsors (Deych, 2019, p.77). The Chinese soft power enhancement also aims to create a positive image of China and establish a positive attitude towards foreign investments through the BRI, which has a beneficial effect on the two previous features of neo-colonialism that were mentioned above.

According to Ramani, the labor market created through the investments in infrastructure and Chinese companies that are starting to operate all over Africa requires the ability of Chinese-speaking Africans, which is being promoted through the cultural investment in soft power by China. (Ramani, 2022, p. 7) As touched upon in the theoretical framework, soft power methods, like fostering friendly relationships and promoting positive attitudes towards China, are a form of neo-colonialism, even though they can be seen as prosperous foreign relations. These tools are used to create a sense of mutual benefit and cooperation, thereby masking the underlying power dynamics. Nevertheless, when these soft power tools aim to make investment possible and create a labor force and political like-mindedness, they shed a different light on it.

5.1.4 Military Presence and Security Cooperation

Though China's involvement and presence are dominantly happening through infrastructure investments as part of the BRI, there have also been occasions of Chinese military presence on the African continent. One of those relatively rare incidents was the opening of a military base

in Djibouti in 2017. Even though the reason for it was the anti-piracy campaign China joined in 2008, after escorting ships and fighting piracy, the activities were almost eradicated by 2012, the reason for the military base in Djibouti in 2017 follows a different plan (Henry, 2016, p. 13). This first military presence is also part of the BRI to secure the area and have access to the Gulf of Aden, which is a strategic point regarding key areas of economic interests for China like the access to the Mediterranean Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean (Henry, 2016, p. 27). Accordingly, it becomes evident, since the anti-piracy does not serve as a valid reason for the military presence because the threat became insignificant, that China's military presence is prevailing to protect China's economic interests and enhance its political power in harbor regions where China invested heavily (Henry, 2016, p. 9; Oyosoro, 2024, p. 14). This can also be seen through the types of boats China is deploying in this area, which are not necessarily suited for anti-piracy missions but rather for any warfare, which various experts have interpreted as a way to practice and improve knowledge crucial to conduct operations in this area, meaning also in connection to Taiwan (Henry, 2016, p. 21).

The military presence also supports intelligence collection, given the position being strategically well located (Downs et al., 2017, p.v). However, it is important to note that China has provided military support to the “National Union for Total Independence of Angola” and to the “National Liberation Front of Angola”, thereby influencing political dynamics and aims through military means, which can be seen as a form of neo-colonialism (Ramani, 2022, p. 4). Despite some concerns of African countries that China is expanding its military influence on the continent to create a neo-colonialist presence, China reassures that it has solely defensive and commercial goals (Oyosoro, 2024, p. 14). Nevertheless, China's expansion of its military presence serves a strategic goal, including the safeguarding of economic growth and expansion, which raises questions about the potential risks and implications of such actions.

5.2 Russia's Neocolonial Practices: The WG and Anti-Western Publicity

5.2.1 Economic Dependency: Resource Exploitation through the WG

While China is practicing its neo-colonialist influence mainly with the help of investment projects surrounding the BRI, which Beijing straightforwardly directs, Russia's influence is more covert. Russian officials are also deployed on the African continent, which will be highly relevant in the next section about Russia's political influence in Africa. However, the bigger presence is happening through proxy actors. These proxy actors are soldiers of the WG, a PMSC with evidently close ties to the Kremlin and the Foreign Ministry of Russia (Mussa &

Dubianskij, 2023, p. 213; Doboš & Purton, 2024, p. 12). As the classification of the WG already foreshadows, it is functioning primarily as a PMSC. Even though in the case of the WG, the privatization is only superficially true (officially private but unofficially directed from Moscow) since the WG is a proxy actor of Russia, the Group can fulfill various purposes. Hereafter, the purely military aspect of the WG will play a role in the last part of this section, whereas speaking about economic neo-colonialism, the WG is working as a service provider in exchange for goods Russia is in demand of. More precisely, this means that Wagner and, thereby, the Russian state is making vast profits out of resource extraction in Africa, where the WG is granted a concession of mining facilities and entire gold, timber, and diamond industries in exchange for security and military support for specific African governments or politicians like the president of the Central African Republic (CAR) President Faustin-Archange Touadéra. Russian resource exploitation through the WG was also observed in Sudan, Mali, and Burkina Faso, to name only a few. (Engels, 2023, p.148; Doboš & Purton, 2024, pp. 12-13, 16)

The WG frequently looks to be deployed in African states with significant natural resources and fragile political circumstances, making it easier to offer security support since there is often a desperate need for it. Wagner is often first supposed to safeguard mines and then starts to get diamonds, uranium, and gold as payment and, lastly, control over mining facilities. (Mussa & Dubianskij, 2023, p. 219)

While the pure presence of the WG and the support of fights against rebels and security provisions are sometimes the payment for resource extraction, Russia is also profiting from arms trade with African nations (Siegle, 2021, p. 80). While Russia is making vast advantages out of arms exports, being the leading arms exporter by controlling 49% of the arms market on the continent, the contracts are primarily unbalanced (little arms for many resources in return, and these deals are still being done, because the countries in crisis require weapons immediately to fight rebels and stay in power). Thus, Russia is the one benefitting from these “arms-for-resource” deals with these roughly 20 African countries.

According to Siegle, even though the African countries are receiving weapons, which is a benefit, they are only contributing to violence and a less stable environment, not contributing to peace, which in turn would lead to economic growth, but rather the opposite, creating a further need for Russia to deliver weapons. Russia is also investing money in nuclear power deals, offering expertise and money to start building power plants all over Africa to gain economically from it. (Siegle, 2021, p. 85) This can become a form of neo-colonialism if, once the power plants are built, the host country is occupied with paying off the loan for it, and the economic gain is going to Russia. So far, Egypt has taken a \$25 billion loan, and even though

the facility will cost \$60 billion, its outcome and success still remain unclear. (Siegle, 2021, p. 86) Additionally, the deployment of the WG does not cost any money for Russia since PMSCs are illegal under Russian law, which makes it plausible for Russia to deny any connection to the WG and outsource the financing, which is also economically beneficial for Moscow (Ferragamo, 2023).

In conclusion, it can be said that the African states or, more precisely, the populations are not getting any lasting advantages out of these economic investments in natural resources, nor does it lead to any improvement of socio-economic conditions of African countries and is often aimed at creating economic isolation (Ramani, 2022, p. 8). This resource exploitation through the WG as a proxy actor of Russia can thereby be seen as economic neo-colonialism, a form of exploitation of African countries, dependency, and unbalanced trade deals.

5.2.2 Political Influence

As already touched upon, the WG is also being employed as security personnel for state officials of African countries, like the president of the CAR. They frequently back specific regimes with the military force of the WG to undermine support for democracy and keep current governments in power so trade deals and alliances between Russia and the African countries remain (Siegle, 2021, p. 82). To keep friendly regimes in power, Russia also provides diplomatic and security advisors that are linked to the Kremlin and can influence politics directly. Consequently, Russia is creating a dependency between African regimes and the Kremlin by having them depend on security personnel and political advisors, giving Russia a great chance to interfere in and influence local politics. (Mussa & Dubianskij, 2023, p. 217)

Here, the political advisor actively pushes for close relations with Moscow and towards certain Russian-friendly regimes, mainly authoritarian, which benefit economic relations and can be maintained more easily and exploited by natural resources.

Russia is also launching disinformation campaigns through media and news, spreading false information about European politicians against the West and former colonial rulers like France, presenting itself as a liberator from colonialism while actively influencing politics in Africa. Some examples of these disinformation campaigns could be observed in Algeria, where Russian proxies spread the information that the Hirak democracy movement is controlled by radical Islamists, or in Uganda, where Russia's media office on the ground called the "African Black Office" targets criticism of the ruling party and spreads discrediting intelligence about the opposition. (African Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS), 2023, p. 4 & 6) Moreover, these are

only two examples from the at least 17 countries where Russia launched disinformation to undermine democracy, as also shown in the two examples (ACSS, 2023).

According to various scholars, Russia is actively trying to influence elections, also with the help of the just mentioned disinformation campaigns and by supporting trade with authoritarian regimes, making them more powerful and thereby helping them to remain in power. For example, in Zimbabwe in 2018, the Russian proxy election monitoring group AFRIC announced the highly problematic elections to be fair and free, and in Mozambique, where Russia has a political advisor deployed, actively supported the reelection campaign of Nyusi in 2019, making it impossible to hold free and fair elections without foreign interference. (ACSS, 2023, p. 8) Hence, Russia is undermining democratic evolution, and in addition to the fact that 11 of the 23 countries where Russia actively undermines democrats are already in conflict, Russia further jeopardizes peace with the WG violates human rights, and spreads violence (Ferragamo, 2023; ACSS, 2023, p. 2). This deliberate influence of political dynamics can be identified as a feature of neo-colonialism, with Russia influencing political regimes for its own economic and strategic benefit.

Moscow has also sent regime-friendly observers or used the WG to monitor elections and assist in achieving the preferred outcome (Paczyńska, 2020, p. 3). Russia is clearly favoring political stability over democratic governance and, hence, supporting authoritarian regimes of resource-rich countries. This political influence can directly be translated into economic gain since this is the main focus of Russia's engagement, even though there is another aspect that is crucial for Russia: the strategic alliances it is gaining. This can be observed by Russia's engagement in the UN, where the alliances with African, mainly authoritarian regimes change the outcome of votes that are crucial and beneficial for Russia. (Siegle, 2021, p. 84) The scope of influence becomes apparent when realizing how many countries Africa entails, given that the 55 African countries collectively represent a quarter of the UN's member states (Hayrapetyan & Kučera, 2022, pp. 40-47). Russia is managing to influence the ruling elites of African states strongly and hence has noticeable power in interfering and leading in African politics (Doboš & Purton, 2024, p. 18). One last aspect Russia can regulate with its tight control over local dynamics in African countries, which plays a role on the international geostrategic playing field, is the influence on refugee flows that come from Africa. According to Siegle, Russia is well aware of the effects refugee inflows are having on Europe and the West and is thus taking advantage of controlling refugee movements by supporting certain regimes in Africa that are intensifying them. Because Russian PMSCs like the WG are causing violence and human rights violations

and are known for the disproportionately high targeting rate of civilians, they are usually prolonging conflict and suffering rather than reducing it.

Consequently, prolonged conflict and violence are producing more refugees, while violence is one of the greatest causes of fleeing the region in Africa (Akokpari, 1998, p. 225). Russia is, in this sense, with the WG all over Africa, able to regulate this at the junction. Hence, Russia found another tool to balance Western power advantage and gain influence on the international stage. (Siegle, 2021, p. 80)

5.2.3 Cultural Hegemony

As already touched upon, Russia is launching disinformation campaigns to underscore democracy and influence politics in Africa. Nevertheless, this is not the only purpose of propaganda; there are other tools that are used to spread specific media content and cultural norms to influence the culture and thoughts of populations in Africa. Nevertheless, it must be mentioned that the concepts of cultural, educational, and political influence are closely entwined and not really able to be entirely separated. Russia is extensively trying to spread anti-West propaganda by pretending to support African countries in their "anti-colonial" fight, mainly against France and towards independence, by simultaneously making Africa increasingly dependent on Russia. (Doboš & Purton, 2024, p. 9) Russia is also trying to reach public acceptance and convey a positive image of its presence in Africa, which is, in return, helping to pursue its economic and political goals. To achieve the public benevolence of African populations, Russia is using all sorts of propaganda tools. One example of this is the movie "Tourist," which was published in the CAR and drew a glorifying image of Russian mercenaries in the fight against rebels and their relationship to the state. (Mussa & Dubanianskij, 2023, p. 219) Another case like that can be observed in Mali, where the former colonial oppressor France's presence in the country remained for years, and Russia usefully utilized the anti-France sentiment to gain support and have people on the streets wave Russian flags and hold pictures of Putin (Mussa & Dubanianskij, 2023, p. 220). Another aspect of socioeconomic influence is done through education. Russia is doing this not as extensively as China but is also holding educational and cultural exchanges with Africa. Around 15,000 students from countries all over Africa have received scholarships to study in Russia over the last few years. However, this appears to be a friendly gesture on the part of the Russians but is, in turn, used to create a positive image of Russia, which then makes economic relations easier, that is being exploited to Russia's advantage. In addition, the education that African students receive in Russia is

strongly influenced by anti-Western propaganda and conveys a glorified image of the Russian state, which, as already mentioned, presents it as the liberator of the colonies and thus makes it easier for all kinds of neo-colonial practices in Africa to be welcomed without suspecting evil intentions, as is often expected of Western countries because they were already part of colonization. The educational exchanges are usually highly welcomed because tertiary education is not taken for granted and is more difficult to achieve in many African countries. (Siegle, 2021, p. 85) Hence, Russia is spreading anti-Western propaganda and practicing cultural influence in Africa, which in turn is precipitating economic and political influence.

5.2.4 Russia's Military Presence and Security Cooperation

The different aspects of neo-colonial practices are closely tied to each other and usually dependent on each other, so they receive their maximum outcome when they are functioning together. As already introduced in the first part of the Russian influence in Africa, one major tool to pursue its goal is the PMSC Wagner, which is already a form of military presence – although officially a private military company, because its control and strategic goals align with the Kremlin. Nevertheless, Russia has increased signed deals regarding military cooperation, including helping the fight against rebels or Islamist groups or providing military training for African countries and supporting local militaries. (Paczyńska, 2020, pp. 4-5) Additionally, Russia's provision of arms often requires training, which Wagner provides, and also often increases already dwelling conflict and rather fuels it than contributes to a ceasefire (Ramani, 2022, p. 8). While military education often goes hand in hand with the delivery of arms, they have built an official military education program for African military personnel, securing Russia's access to high military officials as the newly educated military officers carry on into state employment as well as civil-military relations (Siegle, 2021, p. 85). Overall, Russia has signed over 21 military cooperation agreements as of 2019 and is still engaging in ongoing negotiations regarding establishing military bases in Sudan, the CAR, Madagascar, Egypt, Mozambique, and Eritrea. One major aim of expanding Russia's geopolitical footprint is also closely tied to economic exploitation. Russia hopes its military bases will be located at strategically smart places to secure harbors and access crucial export routes like the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. Similar to China's engagement, they are also trying to set foot on the horn of Africa to secure trade routes along the Gulf of Aden. (Siegle, 2021, p. 84) Russia's military presence on the African continent has major implications for regional security dynamics and geopolitical competition in Africa (Oyosoro, 2024, pp. 14-15). The military

presence furthermore feeds into the other neo-colonial features discussed above, affecting economic relations and political influence, which are being secured and controlled through the military presence on the ground. Therefore, political influence is more effective because it is monitored by the WG, which also applies to economic relations. They also exert political influence directly through, e.g., advisors to local governments. (Mussa & Dubianskij, 2023, pp. 217-219)

5.3 France's Neocolonial Practices: The Concept of Franç

5.3.1 Economic Dependency and Resource Exploitation: The CFA

In contrast to the two previously analyzed cases of neocolonial dynamics in Africa, the significant difference in France's involvement lies in the fact that France is the only of the three cases that is a former colonial power in Africa. Hence, the dynamics did not have to be newly established like Russia and China had to but could evolve out of the colonial structures. One fundamental aspect of this is the CFA currency, a term including two currencies, namely the West African CFA franc and the Central African CFA franc, which are combined and used in 14 African countries, a heritage remaining from French colonialism (Taylor, 2019, p. 1064, 1066). This example of the CFA franc exactly fits Nkrumah's definition of neo-colonialism, where the state is officially independent but remains unofficially under control. According to several economists, France has, by printing the CFA, a tool, with which France hinders development and influences socioeconomic growth on the African continent (Dembélé, 2015; Agbohohou, 2015). The CFA franc is an instrument for France to hold monetary power over countries, control earned capital from Africa, benefit France's economy, and deepen underdevelopment and dependency (Nubukpo, 2015, p. 78).

In 2019, Italian Deputy Prime Minister Luigi di Maio even pleaded with the EU to impose sanctions on France for its neo-colonial policies in France, mainly referring to the currency. Even though this critique is not so often verbalized in the EU, di Maio's statement has generated much support in many African countries, which have been trying to draw attention to it for a long time. (Taylor, 2019, p. 1064; Lecomte, 2017, p.7; Diop, 202, p. 85).

France's reliance on African resources is significant, with 80% of its electricity originating from nuclear power, for which uranium coming from Africa is essential. Imports of chromium, manganese, phosphates, and minerals, crucial for France, are originating from countries using the CFA currency. This setup allows France to win substantial profits from these imports, as they control the currency exchange rate and are shielded from currency depreciations (Taylor,

2019, p. 1065). Additionally, CFA franc members are required to deposit at least 65% of their international reserves into an operations account in Paris, provide exchange cover for 20% of their sight liabilities, and limit credit to each member country to 20% of its previous year's public revenue. Since 2001, CFA franc countries seeking financing must issue bonds in the financial market.

As a result, the external value of the CFA franc is tied to the former colonial authority, which is located in the capital of the former colonial territory. This arrangement allows the former colonizer, France, to retain control over the money supply, monetary and financial regulations, and ultimately, fiscal and economic policies. (Taylor, 2019, pp. 1069-1070; Diop, 2021, pp. 22-29) Most of the 'aid' France provides to Africa is essentially self-originated, and the majority of this aid comes in the form of loans that must be repaid, often with an interest rate that solely benefits France. This perpetuates a structural socioeconomic dependency and control over Africa by its former colonial ruler, hindering development and adversely affecting African economies (Taylor, 2019, pp. 1072,1074,1077; Agbohohou, 2015).

5.3.2 Political Influence: Colonial Heritage

Since the official independence of the *Françafrique* countries, France kept an institutional framework, including the policy making being the task of the president and a close circle of advisers, known as the 'African cell,' where the cooperation mainly occurred with robust networks of businessmen from French companies and the French Secret Service (Bovcon, 2013, p. 10). This was part of the decolonization agreements, ensuring France's involvement in political, economic, and social structures (Martin, 1985, p. 203). Since then, France has repeatedly supported and backed authoritarian leaders or even dictators in order to maintain its beneficial economic deals and recourse trades despite human rights abuses and misconduct (Etogho et al., 2022, p. 838; Deslandes, 2019, p. 29). According to Etogho, France plays a role in the presidential election processes of francophone countries, like in Cameroon in 2018 and in Chad and the Republic of Congo both in 2021, where Francophile dictators have been reelected which Macron, the French president, approved legitimate, despite violent crackdowns on protestors and political opponents as well as the allegation of corruption and fraud (Etogho et al., 2022, p. 839; Deslandes, 2019, p. 30). Another form of political influence France indirectly practices is the support of repression of anti-French activists. Many Francophile leaders are being seen as enforcers of *Françafrique*, and the opposition in those countries is often accompanied by anti-French resentment, which is being met with arrest, torture, or expel and overall bans of pan-African activists by the local leaders that France is supporting.

France, along with its global allies, has actively suppressed dissent against its neocolonial influence in Africa, often targeting outspoken critics who advocate for dismantling this influence. Examples include the ousting of Dr. Arikana Chihombori-Quao, former African Union ambassador to the United States, and the labeling of Pan-African activists Nathalie Yamb and Kemi Seba as agents of misinformation. (Etogho et al., 2022, p. 842)

5.3.3 Cultural Hegemony

During colonialism, the spreading of the colonialist language was seen as a "weapon of conquest," consolidating a social hierarchy, placing France as superior and dominant towards the francophone colonies (Etogho et al., 2022, p. 836; Chidoze et al., 2013, p. 15). This train of thought lingers in the current structures of former colonies, where French often remains the spoken language and, more importantly, the official language of educational systems. Furthermore, the learning and speaking of French is seen as for the advanced and post-colonial elites that are French-educated, speaking, and assimilated. (Chidoze et al., 2013, p. 17)

Based on various papers, because of the close connection between language and culture, the domination of the language imposed by the former colonial power contributes to cultural hegemony and supports the maintenance of colonial structures. More precisely, linguistic domination results in cultural dependency and influence since the media and literature consumed in Africa are often from France, conveying biased views seen from the Western viewpoint. This enhances soft power influence, like influencing thoughts and cultural values; which is not necessarily neo-colonialism, but in combination with the other features that are part of France's soft power strategies it might be. (Deslandes, 2019, p. 30; Giladi, 2018, p. 84)

Similar to the former examined cases of China and Russia, the promotion of the French language also propagates a glorified image of the former colonizer France and makes maintenance of Francophile socio-economic and political systems or administrative structures easier (Etogho et al., 2022, p. 836). Even the current president of France, Macron introduced the international strategy for the French language, which aims to promote the teaching and spreading of it, which can be identified, especially in the former colonies in Africa, as a promotion of France through linguistic supremacy (Etogho et al., 2022, p. 837; Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Etrangères, 2022). France also nurtures its vast network of cultural institutions and schools and, as a consequence of partnerships and cultural exchange, living French individuals on the African continent to advance its soft power. Soft power influence refers to the ability to shape the preferences of others through appeal and attraction, and in the

case of France, this is done through the promotion of its language, culture, and values. (Vallin, 2015, p. 101; Deslandes, 2019, p. 32; Chidoze et al., 2013, p. 17)

In conclusion, it becomes apparent that the French language remains a significant tool to let neo-colonial structures prevail, keeping former power structures, influencing the educational system, supporting cultural hegemony, and promoting France's position as superior.

5.3.4 Military Presence and Security Cooperation

One aspect of the achieved 'independence' of former French colonies in Africa that was part of the bilateral agreement they were supposed to sign in order to receive freedom was the right to permanently station troops in the countries. Together with this came the right, or obligation, as France phrased it, to intervene militarily if invited by the governments of the countries or if this is debilitated; the resident French ambassador can make this request. (Etogho et. al, 2022, p. 832; Saka, 2023, p. 41)

On top of that, bilateral cooperation regarding counterterrorism operations increases the presence of France's troops in Francophile countries even more. Based on Etogho, due to evidently little success in those operations, France's military presence in Africa is increasingly portrayed to have different reasons like safeguarding other interests in the countries such as economic agreements or in general control over geopolitical dynamics and power dominance (Etogho et al., 2022, p. 840). Besides, the provision of French military advisors, as well as military equipment and training by France, is a common habit that can be seen. (Vallin, 2015, p. 81; Yates, 2018, p. 391)

Even though the French military presence in francophone African states declined towards the end of the 20th century, France can repeatedly be seen to play a significant role in African conflicts. This leading military actor, also discernable in UN missions where France is only one among other Western countries, can, of course, be explained due to the knowledge France has about cultural habits and, as already mentioned, the common language (Vallin, 2015, pp. 94-95). Nonetheless, the military interventions increased again from 2010 onwards, with simultaneous interventions in Libya and Côte d'Ivoire. The significant difference to these interventions, and also the following in Mali and the CAR, was that France ensures to have multilateral guarantees from for example, the UN security council or the African Union, mainly to not be accused of neo-colonialism (Vallin, 2015, pp. 97-98; Saka, 2023, p. 55). One might argue that France's military approach shifted towards a path of peacebuilding and local

government development, even though this can also be used to influence politics (Recchia, 2020, p. 474).

Overall, regardless of multilateral efforts, France's military presence in Africa perpetuates its neocolonial interests by ensuring political stability, protecting economic interests, and projecting power in the region.

5.4 Comparing China, Russia, and France

5.4.1 Comparing Economic Influence Across China, Russia, and France

In conclusion, all three cases practice a form of economic influence and exploitation in Africa, which can be identified as a neo-colonial dynamic. Comparing the extent of the economic engagement, it becomes apparent that China has by far made the biggest FDI in Africa with its BRI or, more precisely, the DSR. In the years from 2014 to 2018, FDI from China accounted for 16% of the total FDI that went to Africa, while France contributed half of that, meaning around 8% of the total FDI going to Africa (Galal, 2024). Russia, in contrast, only contributes to less than 1% of the FDI that goes to the continent (Droin, 2023, p. 5). China's approach in Africa primarily hinges on substantial long-term investments and the advancement of cross-regional connectivity. However, China has made minimal attempts to address regional security concerns but is aiming for dependency, which it creates through debts and loans.

On the other hand, Russia's strategy in Africa is characterized by a calculated, opportunistic stance. Moscow combines transactional agreements in sectors like mining, energy, and defense with tactical demonstrations of its opposition to Western norms and military support for authoritarian regimes facing crises. This approach makes it possible for Russia to secure mining rights and control major natural resource industries in connection with its military presence, which is securing it and often also the payment.

In stark contrast, France, the only former colonizer in the region of these three, has utilized its established structures, such as the currency CFA, to practice economic neo-colonialism. With this major tool of having control over currency, France is able to strengthen dependency and cause further underdevelopment in Africa by deciding over prices, interest rates, and regulating policies and how much money is being printed, a practice that can be seen as exploitative and unjust.

In conclusion, comparing the economic neocolonial influence across the three cases reveals distinct priorities and strategies shaped in the case of France by its colonial legacy, for China, its vast economic capacity to engage on the continent, and for Russia, mainly by its geopolitical

interests, which aims to cover up their traces, using proxy actors, and profiting from natural resources.

5.4.2 Comparing Political Influence across China, Russia, and France

Regarding the political influence, Russia is taking, compared to the other two cases, a very straightforward strategy. For instance, their interference in elections can be seen in Mozambique, while the undermining of democratic ambitions is evident in Zimbabwe, and open support for favorable elites is demonstrated through the support of the CAR's regime. These actions are not just political maneuvers but manipulative tactics that are commonly known and are performed through disinformation campaigns and political advisors. While France is also offering political and diplomatic advisors to certain African governments, their engagement is different. For example, France's utilization of historical ties can be seen in its control of the CFA. Russia's engagement differs so far that they are securing it through the WG, having a military observer on the ground, which can stifle potential dissent in no time. Even though France's mechanisms regarding its political influence are once more determined by the structures established during colonialism, France and Russia have in common, in contrast to China, that they openly support specific regimes despite them being involved in human rights violations or other authoritarian nature, only to maintain beneficial economic relations. While Russia is trying to spread anti-Western propaganda, France is aiming at silencing anti-France sentiment to retain its benefits.

In contrast to the previous cases, China's approach to political influence in Africa is less overt. It does not deploy political advisors but rather works through the goods it exports as part of its investments and its surveillance techniques that provide tools for maintaining authoritarian regimes. In essence, while China, Russia, and France all pursue unique strategies to exert political influence in Africa, they share a common thread of supporting regimes that align with their economic interests, even at the expense of democratic principles and human rights. However, the methods they employ vary significantly, with Russia's open interference, France's use of historical ties and established structures, and China's subtle yet pervasive approach through economic investments and technology exports.

5.4.3 Comparing Cultural Hegemony across China, Russia, and France

All three cases have in common that they offer African countries free scholarships and cultural exchanges to boost the positive image of each neo-colonizer and convey certain values and knowledge, like the Russian education suggests anti-Western propaganda, or whatever seems beneficial for France, China, and Russia to practice neo-colonialism. This soft power influence aims to make economic relations easier and work against the underlying fear of African countries that foreign economic engagement could have malevolent intentions like exploitation. However, there are certain differences in how the three countries operate beyond the educational exchanges and free scholarships. France is yet again utilizing benefits achieved through their colonial era, mainly their linguistic supremacy. While France uses their language to influence and especially convey a superior image of everything connected to France, thereby favoring everything imposed by France, from economic deals to local policies, Russia uses tools like movies that deliver a glorified image of Russian mercenaries. With that, they aim again at the positive attitude that makes trade deals and resource extraction possible. China, in contrast, practices this cultural influence to a significantly lesser extent than Russia and France. Hence, regardless of China building schools and lavatories and heavily promoting the Chinese language, the Chinese emphasis in their neo-colonial practices lies in the economic influence.

5.4.4 Comparing Military Presence and Security Cooperation across China, Russia, and France

Once more, when speaking about the military presence of the three countries, the different objectives become apparent, shaped by their history, economic interests, and geopolitical aims. Russia's military presence is determined by its proxy, the WG, which is not only interfering in the military, meaning the help against rebels or whatever entity could be a threat to Russia's influence in the region, but also as a tool for political influence. As a military presence, the WG is utilized to support authoritarian regimes, uphold strategic partnerships, and secure arms sales, where their service as a security corporation is often the payment in exchange. France, again, is drawing on colonial ties and maintaining a military presence in selected African nations, primarily for security cooperation and counterterrorism efforts, but also to influence politics and secure economic interests. In contrast, China's military presence in Africa is relatively limited, focusing on protecting its economic interests. Nevertheless, with their different

approaches, all three countries shape the security dynamics on the continent, echoing strategic, often economic interests in the broader geopolitical picture.

6. Conclusion

This thesis has examined the different forms of neo-colonial dynamics in Africa, exercised by three countries, China, Russia, and France, which were thus compared. While trying to contribute to the existing literature surrounding neo-colonial practices in Africa, a framework of neo-colonial features was developed, explained, and then applied to the three cases. The findings of this paper deliver a foundation for further research, especially in regards to diving deeper into the single cases. Furthermore, the extent of external validity is limited since only three cases have been examined without collecting data on the ground.

Analyzing and comparing the three different cases aimed at exploring the research question;

"In which ways are China, Russia, and France engaging in neocolonial practices in Africa, and what are the key differences and similarities in their approaches and impacts on the continent's economic, political, cultural, and military landscape?"

The analysis has meticulously examined all main features of neo-colonialism: economic, political, cultural, and military engagement of the perpetrator country in Africa in all three cases, and their presence was identified just to varying extends.

Regarding the economic influence as a way of neo-colonial engagement on the continent, China leads in investment, mainly through the BRI, while France utilizes colonial-era structures like the CFA currency for economic control. Russia, in contrast, employs transactional agreements and military support to secure resource extraction rights and exploit natural resources for economic gain.

Another way of interfering in Africa, identified as a form of neo-colonialism, is through political influence. Here, Russia openly interferes in elections and supports authoritarian regimes, while France uses historical ties and established structures like economic engagement and the CFA to maintain political control. In distinction to the two other cases, China exerts more unobtrusive influence through economic investments and technological exports, often supporting authoritarian regimes subtly.

Cultural hegemony is another feature of neo-colonialism, and it is the major soft power among the ways neo-colonialism is practiced. France, again, utilizes its colonial history and leverages linguistic supremacy and cultural ties from the colonial era. Russia promotes a glorified image

of itself through media and movies, using its PMSCs as tools in the media to promote its image and hence uses them further for other goals like economic and political ones. China focuses more on economic influence than cultural hegemony, despite investing in educational exchanges and language promotion, which they do support, but only to a minor extent, compared to the two other countries. China's main way of practicing neo-colonial influence continues to be the path through economic engagement.

The last significant way of analyzing neo-colonial dynamics is the military presence and security cooperation, which, for Russia, is a major tool through its PMSCs employed all over Africa. Russia uses proxy actors like the Wagner Group for military presence and political influence to secure economic interests. France maintains a military presence primarily for security cooperation and counterterrorism, and China's military presence is limited to protecting its economic interests. However, all three countries shape security dynamics on the continent to echo their economic and geopolitical interests.

In summary, the main similarities between the three cases are that they all seek to exert economic dominance on the continent, albeit the means and the extent vary. The main differences here can be seen in the strategies, where China leads with investments, France counts on the CFA currency, and Russia uses military support for resource exploitation. Another similarity is their geopolitical interest on the continent, and despite their differences in military engagement, they all shape the security dynamics in Africa, aligning with their economic goals. Some of the most significant differences between the three countries lie in their political engagement. Even though it can be observed in all three cases, Russia is the most obvious one, interfering in elections and openly exercising political influence, which is different from France and China. France's political engagement seems more subtle through utilizing former colonial structures, and China's approach is through economic investment, avoiding overt political interference. Key differences in the cultural engagement are similar, where France utilizes colonial history and linguistic supremacy, while Russia promotes its positive image through media and movies, often using PMSCs as tools. China focuses more on economic influence, with limited investment in cultural exchange. Regarding military engagement, France and China are rather similar, focusing on counter-terrorism and security cooperation, even though China's focus lies here primarily on the protection of economic interests. Russia, in contrast, is employing PMSCs for military presence, political influence, and the protection of economic advantages.

In conclusion, China, Russia, and France are all engaging in neocolonial practices on the continent. However, their engagement varies significantly in their approaches and impacts.

China focuses on economic dominance, Russia strikes with strategic opportunism, and France utilizes its historical ties and colonial structures to maintain control and influence. These variations provide insight into the diverse strategies employed by these countries.

Particularly interesting and also leaving room for further research, is the legality behind the different strategies, where the PMSC as a proxy actor for Russia might be the most noteworthy since they are officially private and moreover forbidden in Russia, so the accountability of the Kremlin seems almost impossible, when it comes to human rights violations in Africa. This strategy is remarkable not just for its effectiveness in securing economic interests and political influence but also for the legal ambiguities it creates. The WG operates in a grey zone, allowing Russia to sustain plausible deniability and complicating efforts to hold the Kremlin accountable for human rights violations. This use of seemingly private entities to exert state influence is a sophisticated method of neo-colonialism, warranting deeper legal and ethical scrutiny.

Furthermore, China's FDIs seem to be advantageous for African countries, which makes it harder to point out the negative neo-colonial dynamics created through dependency on loans and debts. This subtle economic domination adopts a neo-colonial dynamic that is less obvious but equally potent. The complexity of China's economic strategies highlights the need for a nuanced analysis of the long-term implications of these investments on African sovereignty and autonomy, as well as the possible advantages they might hold for African countries.

A noteworthy aspect in the findings about France's neo-colonial dynamics, which continue to this day and are traces from colonial times, committed by a Western country that tries to promote human rights but, on the other hand, violates them with these actions in Africa. Considering these results of the thesis, especially France's active domination and control through the CFA franc, seem even more paradoxical, considering France as a nation, promoting human rights and additionally being responsible for vast atrocities during colonialism. This contradiction between France's global human rights advocacy and its neo-colonial practices offers a rich area for further investigation, particularly in examining the ethical implications and the responses from African nations, as well as steps that should be taken by the Western community in order to stay true to its values.

In summary, these notable findings not only enhance the understanding of how the three countries engage in neo-colonial practices but also leave room for further research and policy analysis. The sophisticated and varied strategies employed by these countries illustrate the evolving nature of neo-colonialism, which demands ongoing attention and action to address its impacts on African nations.

As mentioned at the beginning of the thesis, Africa is a continent that holds enormous potential in every respect and continues to grow, potentially reshaping power dynamics globally. Hence, the interference of other countries that are trying to benefit from natural resources and population growth will further increase, as well as the neo-colonial dynamics. Even though the chapter of colonialism is closed, neo-colonialism cannot be ignored but has to be stopped in order to prevent further human rights violations.

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