THE AFRICAN EXPERIENCE OF TRANSCOLONALITY:
A CASE STUDY OF THE REPUBLIC OF NIGER

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ABSTRACT

Transcoloniality, a rapidly advancing wave, extends beyond the confines of globalization, emphasizing collaboration and mutual understanding among diverse cultures. This framework acknowledges the enduring impact of colonialism and neocolonialism while advocating for a more equitable society. However, its viability and sustainability in the African context remain uncertain, given the unique challenges faced by individual nations. The African continent, having traversed various phases from colonialism to neocolonialism and subsequent decolonization efforts, faces the critical question of transcending colonial legacies. The paper explores this question through the lens of Niger Republic, recognizing the diversity of challenges and potential solutions. It raises the issue of whether African nations can achieve genuine independence, economic autonomy, and cultural resurgence without severing global ties, emphasizing the need for mutual collaboration. The paper supports the position that Africa has the potential to transcend colonial and post-colonial phases, addressing issues such as extreme poverty, migration, and socio-economic challenges. Transcoloniality provides an avenue for African societies to reclaim their cultural heritage while benefiting from global collaboration. Examining the recent military coup in Niger, the paper questions whether the Nigerien military junta reflects the ideals of transcoloniality. Employing historical hermeneutics and philosophical analysis, the study asserts that the junta aligns with transcolonial principles. By promoting Afro-constructivism and intercultural philosophy, and merging diverse epistemic traditions, transcoloniality aims to transcend cultural boundaries, fostering a new African identity rooted in the continent’s context. The awakened spirit within Niger’s military junta suggests a potential catalyst for development in the country, highlighting the transformative possibilities inherent in embracing transcolonial ideals.

Keywords: Afro-constructivism, Decolonization, Economic autonomy, Global collaboration, Niger Republic, Military Junta, Trans-coloniality.

Introduction

The philosophical underpinnings of former colonies often reflect the ideologies of their colonizers. This is particularly evident in the contrasting approaches to egalitarianism, liberty, and fraternity within Francophone African countries. French colonialism heavily influenced Francophone African philosophy, which emphasizes the ideals of the French Revolution: égalité (equality), liberté (liberty), and fraternité (fraternity). Égalité (Equality) in Francophone philosophy focuses on a more centralized and interventionist approach to achieve equality. The state plays a crucial role in ensuring social mobility and reducing economic disparities (Senghor, 1964). This can be seen in policies like social safety nets and state-controlled education. But, French colonialism established an unequal system, prioritizing French interests over those of Nigeriens. Resource extraction, particularly uranium, enriched French companies while leaving minimal benefits for local communities (Gegout, 2018). Educational opportunities favored the elite, hindering social mobility and
perpetuating a stratified society. This stands in contrast to the promise of equal opportunity supposedly enshrined in *égalité*.

Although, liberty is valued, it is often seen as contingent upon fulfilling one’s duties to the state and society. This stands in contrast to the Anglophone emphasis on individual liberties (*Mamdani, 1996*). There is no liberty in French colonialism in Niger given that French rule restricted political liberties there. The assimilation policy was aimed at suppressing indigenous cultures and imposing French language and customs (*Bovcon, 2013*). Nigeriens had limited control over their own political destiny, with the French administration often wielding significant influence. This contradicts the *liberté* ideal, which underlines individual freedoms and self-determination.

Also, *fraternité* (fraternity) in Francophone philosophy emphasizes national unity and social cohesion. This focus on a unified national identity can sometimes overshadow ethnic or cultural differences within a nation (*Mhembre, 2017*). However, French colonialism often exacerbated ethnic and regional divisions within Niger. The focus on French cultural assimilation could overshadow and marginalize indigenous traditions. Additionally, the *Françafrique* system, a network of informal French influence in former colonies, could prioritize maintaining favorable regimes over fostering genuine partnership with the Nigerien people (*Bovcon, 2013*). This raises questions about the sincerity of *fraternité* in the French-Niger relationship.

In contrast, Anglophone African philosophy was influenced by British colonialism which prioritizes individual rights and limited government intervention. Equality of opportunity is the central idea but with less emphasis on state-driven redistribution of wealth. This aligns with the concept of a level playing field where individuals can achieve success through hard work (*Gyekye, 1997*). Individual liberties, including freedom of speech, religion, and assembly, are paramount. This is in harmony with John Locke’s social contract theory, where individual rights are surrendered to a limited government in exchange for security and order (*Eze, 1997*). We can see that social cohesion is valued; it is seen as arising organically from individual interactions within a market economy, rather than being imposed by the state.

Despite these differences, there exists a fundamental ideological unity between Francophone and Anglophone African philosophies. Both traditions are rooted in Enlightenment ideals of reason, progress, and individual dignity with political cum economic exploitation being their watch words. They both grapple with the challenges of building democratic societies and reconciling traditional values with modernity albeit behind an ulterior motive (*Wiredu, 1996*).

France’s political engagement with Niger and her former colonies has been complex and multifaceted, spanning over a century. France colonized Niger in the late 1890s and integrated her into French West Africa. This period was marked by resource exploitation, assimilation policies aimed at imposing French culture and language, and the subjugation of indigenous political structures (*Audu & Ibrahim, 2019*). Nigerien resistance movements emerged throughout the colonial period, culminating in the rise of nationalist movements in the mid-20th century. Leaders like Hamani Diori, a key figure in the Sawaba party, and Bakary Djibo, who led the Nigerien Progressive Party (PPN), spearheaded the fight for independence. Diori ultimately emerged victorious, becoming Niger’s first president after independence in 1960.

After independence, however, the relationship remained close, with France maintaining significant political and economic influence. The concept of *Françafrique* describes France’s informal network of influence in its former colonies, including Niger. This system involved political and military support for regimes deemed favorable to French interests; this often raises concerns about neocolonialism (*Gervais, 2018*). France has a long history of military cooperation with Niger which includes providing military training and equipment, and intervening in times of political instability.

The French military presence in Niger has been justified as essential for counter-terrorism efforts in the Sahel region (*International Crisis Group, 2020*). France, being the major source of development aid for Niger, focused on areas like education, healthcare, and infrastructure development. However, criticisms exist regarding the effectiveness and transparency of aid programs (*Reestorff, 2015*). Niger is blessed by nature for being a major producer of uranium, a key resource for French nuclear power and this could be an
indication for enduring influence of France in Niger affairs. The environmental and social costs of uranium extraction in Niger have been a source of contention, with accusations of exploitation by French companies (Gervais, 2018). Niger has a history of political instability, including several coups d’état. France’s role in these events remains a subject of debate, with some accusing France of supporting certain factions or failing to prevent coups (McGowan & Johnson, 1984). France has been a vocal supporter of democratization in Niger. However, concerns persist about human rights abuses and democratic backsliding under certain regimes (Human Rights Watch, 2023).

Given the above, the African experience of Transcoloniality stands as a paramount framework of inquiry within the intricate landscape of post-colonial discourse. This exploration delves into the nuanced and evolving dynamics shaping the socio-political, economic, and cultural fabric of African nations, notably exemplified through a detailed study of the Niger Republic. The notion of Transcoloniality encapsulates a continuum beyond mere decolonization, prompting a critical inquiry into the persistence and evolution of colonial legacies within African contexts. The focal point of this paper revolves around the intersection of historical colonial imprints, the quest for true independence, and the intricate post-colonial realities encountered by the Niger Republic. It probes into the phases preceding the era of Transcoloniality, highlighting the trajectories of colonialism, nationalism, political independence, economic dependencies, and the subsequent quest for decolonization. Specifically, it accentuates the paradoxes and complexities faced by African nations, exemplified by the Niger-France saga, the exploitation of natural resources like Uranium, and recent events such as the coup in Niger Republic.

This paper aims to dissect, analyze, and comprehend the manifestations of Transcoloniality in the African context, using Niger Republic as a case study. It seeks to unravel the tensions, contradictions, and potentials embedded in the African pursuit of true liberation, economic autonomy, and cultural resurgence amidst the enduring legacies of colonization. By scrutinizing the socio-political and economic dynamics, it aspires to offer insights into the complexities of transcolonial experiences and their implications for contemporary African societies. The African experience of Transcoloniality, exemplified through the lens of Niger Republic, poses a fundamental question: Can African nations transcend the persistent legacies of colonialism and navigate towards genuine independence, economic autonomy, and cultural resurgence without severing global ties, while engaging in mutual collaboration?

The paper seeks to fill a crucial gap in the discourse surrounding post-colonial African experiences. By focusing on Niger Republic as a case study, it aims to unravel the complexities of transcolonial dynamics and their implications for African nations in their quest for autonomy, liberty, and cultural identity, fostering a deeper understanding of the African post-colonial narrative. This paper’s implications extend to academia, policy formulation, and social discourse, fostering a nuanced understanding of African experiences and informing strategies for inclusive development, equitable partnerships, and cultural resurgence rooted in indigenous values. In essence, this study endeavors to shed light on the African journey through transcoloniality, using the Niger Republic as a microcosm, to deconstruct the multifaceted complexities and potential inherent in Africa’s pursuit of genuine emancipation. To achieve this purpose, the paper adopts historical and analytical approach to philosophical inquiry on the subject matter of Africa’s embodiment of transcoloniality.

Transcoloniality Defined

Transcoloniality is a relatively recent concept used to understand the enduring legacies of colonialism in the postcolonial world. It goes beyond a simple notion of "after colonialism" and instead highlights the continuities, entanglements, and reconfigurations of power relations established during colonial periods. The term transcoloniality is composed of two words Trans and Coloniality. The prefix "trans" signifies "across," "beyond," or "through." In the context of transcoloniality, it emphasizes the ongoing and evolving nature of colonial power structures that extend beyond the formal end of colonial rule (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020). But, for Agbakoba, trans here precisely implies moving beyond pre-colonial and colonial phases in Africa. Coloniality, on the other hand, refers to the broader system of domination established by European empires, encompassing political, economic, cultural, and epistemological dimensions (Maldonado-Torres, 2023).
The concept of transcoloniality has a historical background in the late 20th and early 21st centuries as scholars began to critique the limitations of traditional postcolonial theories. Traditional theories often focused on the moment of independence and the formation of new nation-states, neglecting the persistence of colonial structures and ideologies. Some scholars have contributed to the development of transcolonial studies. For instance, Mignolo (2014) emphasizes the "decolonial turn" and the need to move beyond Eurocentric knowledge production. Quijano (2000) highlights the concept of "coloniality of power" as a structure that continues to shape global hierarchies. Burawoy et al. (2000) examines the "ethnography of modernity" and how colonial categories continue to operate in the postcolonial world. Spivak (1999) studies the subaltern voice and the challenges of representation in the postcolonial world. Chakrabarty (2000) investigates the concept of "provincializing Europe" and the need to decenter Eurocentric narratives. McClintock (1992) explores the concept of imperial nostalgia and the ways in which colonial legacies continue to be imagined and redeployed. Mbembe (2001) analyzes the concept of "postcolonial condition" and the enduring violence and inequalities in the postcolonial world.

Among all these voices on the development of transcoloniality, Lukaszyk (2020) stands out in the discourse. She explores the concept of transcolonial theory as a means of developing a new African identity and promoting development. According to Lukaszyk, transcolonial theory is a relatively new field of study that focuses on the interconnectedness of different forms of colonialism and their impact on the contemporary world. (Lukaszyk, 2020) She argues that transcolonial theory provides a useful framework for understanding the complexities of colonialism in Africa and moving beyond the limitations of postcolonialism. One of the key ideas of transcolonial theory, according to her, is the recognition of the interdependence and mutual influence of different forms of colonialism, which includes not only European colonialism but also Arab and Asian colonialism. This approach highlights the ways in which colonialism has shaped the contemporary world and challenges the simplistic binary of colonizer and colonized. In addition to providing a more significant understanding of colonialism, Lukaszyk contends that transcolonial theory can help create a new African identity that is not limited to the nation-state and acknowledges the diversity of African cultures. However, she emphasizes that transcolonial theory not only recognizes the complexities and diversity of cultures, but also focuses on the influence of other colonial powers beyond Europe. She suggests that transcolonial theory can offer a new approach to development that moves beyond the limitations of postcolonial development models. Postcolonial models often neglect local contexts, prioritize Western ideals, and struggle to address ingrained inequalities; hindering true development. She submits that these models have often failed to address the root causes of poverty and inequality in Africa, which are often rooted in the legacy of colonialism. A transcolonial approach can help to create more effective and sustainable development strategies by recognizing the interconnectedness of different regions and cultures and the ongoing impact of colonialism. (Lukaszyk, 2020)

Transcoloniality as used in this paper is a framework that is built on Afro-constructivism and inter-culturality. According to Agbakoba (2019) the idea of transcoloniality involves transcending the cultural borders and limitations of the pre-colonial and colonial world through positive and constructive creativity. This allows for the integration of pre-colonial and colonial heritages and the achievement of cognitive and other forms of progress. The production of knowledge in Africa, in response to the challenges and problems of existence in Africa, and shaped by the African context, reflects Africanity. This process of knowledge production can be based on either a ratio-scientific or ratio-intuitionist epistemic orientation, but the truth value of these efforts is determined by the African context and the criteria of veridic status, functionality, utility, aesthetics, and moral values. To address issues of epistemic injustice, according to Agbakoba, the state and knowledge communities should seek redresses, and (epistemicide refers to the destruction of indigenous knowledge systems)should include solutions like the conservation of endangered knowledge forms. He stresses for the importance of intercultural philosophy and trans-colonization in addressing epistemic injustices and forming African identity.

Agbakoba’s idea of trans-colonization suggests that epistemic orientations play a crucial role in the production of knowledge; that individuals and knowledge communities must choose their preferred orientation for cognitive progress. Interculturality involves mutual respect and understanding of all knowledge traditions, including fusion and broadening of horizons. To address epistemic injustice and epistemicide, funding for the
traditional sector should be tailored to the nature of the research and the public good, and the African state
can intervene to preserve traditional knowledge systems. The identity of an African person can be formed
through creativity, including epistemic creativity, which enables the integration of pre-colonial and colonial
heritages under higher values reflecting Africanity. Given this, the base epistemic orientation could be either
ratio-scientific or ratio-intuitionist, but the veridic statuses, functionality, utility, aesthetics, and morality of
the knowledge produced are determined by the African context. (Agbakoba, 2022)

Core Tenets of Transcoloniality

The core tenets of transcoloniality include, but are not limited to, the following descriptions:

- Colonial structures, institutions, and ideologies persist long after formal independence, shaping power
dynamics and social relations.
- The global power structures established during colonialism continue to influence political, economic,
and social relations in the postcolonial world.
- The postcolonial world is a web of complex connections shaped by colonial histories. Former colonies
are not isolated entities but remain entangled with former colonizers and other actors.
- Colonial ways of knowing and representing the world continue to hold sway, necessitating the develop-
ment of decolonial epistemologies.
- Transcoloniality offers a critical lens for understanding the complexities of the postcolonial world.
- It highlights the continuities, entanglements, and reconfigurations of power, moving beyond the sim-
plistic notion of a clean break from colonialism.

Features of Transcoloniality

From the backdrop of the above tenets, certain features of transcoloniality become apparent. They include:

- Critique of Decolonization: Transcoloniality argues that decolonization, while crucial, might not ful-
ly address the enduring legacies of colonialism. National liberation struggles may not dismantle the
underlying structures of power established during colonial rule (Agbakoba, 2022).
- Persistence of Colonial Legacies: Colonial models of development, governance, and knowledge produc-
tion often persist in the postcolonial world, hindering progress on African terms (Agbakoba, 2019).
- Unequal Exchange and Power Dynamics: Transcoloniality emphasizes the continued dependence of
former colonies on former colonial powers in the global economic and political spheres (Agbakoba,
2023; Quijano, 2000).
- Decolonization of Knowledge Production: It calls for the development of decolonial epistemologies
that challenge Eurocentric knowledge systems and center the experiences of formerly colonized peoples
(Mignolo, 2011; Agbakoba, 2008).

By acknowledging these features, transcoloniality provides a framework for dismantling colonial legacies and
charting a more just and equitable path forward.

Applications of Transcoloniality in Africa

Transcoloniality finds practical application in concepts like Afro-constructivism and interculturality in Africa.
For instance, Afro-constructivism emphasizes African agency, responsibility, and creativity in development.
It rejects the notion of Africa as a passive recipient of externally imposed models (Agbakoba, 2019; Manda-
ni, 1996). Transcoloniality challenges the universality of Western development models. Afro-constructivism
aligns with this by advocating for development models that address Africa’s specific needs and cultural
contexts. Transcoloniality highlights the persistence of colonial power structures that disadvantage former
colonies. Afro-constructivism encourages African nations to take ownership of their development processes,
reducing dependence on external actors. Interculturality, on the other hand emphasizes mutual respect,
understanding, and exchange between cultures. This aligns with critique of colonial hierarchies consistent
with the spirit of transcoloniality . It encourages moving beyond binaries since transcoloniality critiques
the colonizer/colonized binary. Interculturality fosters collaboration and knowledge exchange on an equal
footing, dismantling these imposed hierarchies. It also encourages mutual learning, where Africa can share
its rich cultural heritage and knowledge systems while engaging with the wider world (Agbakoba, 2008). By embracing Afro-constructivism and interculturality, African nations can move beyond the limitations of decolonization and contribute to a more just and equitable global order.

Given its potential, transcoloniality faces various challenges including dismantling power structures given that entrenched power dynamics and the resistance of former colonial powers can hinder progress. Also, internal obstacles such as corruption, political instability, and ethnic conflicts within African countries can impede Afro-constructivism and intercultural dialogue. Despite these challenges, the framework offered by transcoloniality, Afro-constructivism, and interculturality provides a valuable roadmap to Africa’s development in terms of critical engagement; that is, African nations must critically engage with the legacies of colonialism and the global power structures within which they operate. Promoting social responsibilities and fostering African agency requires investing in education, promoting democratic institutions, and empowering civil society. It involves collaboration among African nations and South-South partnerships. This is crucial for collective bargaining power and knowledge exchange. And, actively promoting decolonial epistemologies within academia, education systems, and media is essential for dismantling Eurocentric dominance in knowledge production. By taking these steps and addressing the related challenges, Africa can harness the potential of transcoloniality, Afro-constructivism, and interculturality to create a future defined by self-determination, collaboration, and a more just global order.

Transcoloniality offers a nuanced understanding of the postcolonial world, moving beyond the limitations of decolonization narratives. By acknowledging the enduring legacies of colonialism, unequal power dynamics, and the need for decolonial knowledge production, it provides a framework for dismantling these structures and charting a new path. Through Afro-constructivism and interculturality, African nations can take ownership of their development, engage in mutually beneficial partnerships, and contribute to a more equitable global order. The journey towards a transcolonial future requires critical engagement, fostering agency, and collaboration. By embracing these principles, Africa can redefine its place in the world on its own terms.

The Niger Experience and the Crystallizations of Transcoloniality

The Republic of Niger is a landlocked nation in West Africa, boasts stunning landscapes from the sweeping sands of the Sahara Desert to the fertile valleys of the Niger River. Yet, its rich history and cultural tapestry are often overshadowed by the challenges it faces. France colonized Niger in 1900, integrating it into French West Africa. This period significantly impacted the country’s social fabric, introducing a centralized administration and resource extraction (Audu & Ibrahim, 2019). Resistance movements emerged, culminating in the establishment of the Sawaba Party, a nationalist movement advocating for independence (van Walraven, 2003). Niger finally achieved independence in 1960 (Shillington, 2013). Despite independence, the legacy of colonialism left deep scars. Political instability was a hallmark of the early years, with coups and counter-coups leading to the establishment of a one-party state under President Hamani Diori (Decalo, 1997). Diori’s regime faced criticism for corruption and its inability to address poverty and inequality, leading to the military coup of 1974 by General Seyni Kountché (Wudil et al., 2022). Kountché’s rule saw a shift towards socialist policies and some economic improvement, but political repression continued (Elischer & Mueller, 2019). The 1990s witnessed a wave of democratization movements across Africa. In Niger, General Ali Saibou, Kountché’s successor, agreed to a multi-party election in 1993, marking the beginning of a democratic transition (Martin, 2008). However, the period has been since marked by further political instability. Coups in 1996 and 1999 interrupted the democratic process (Miller, 2011). Civilian rule was eventually restored, but concerns regarding corruption and democratic backsliding persist (Kisangani, 2012).

Niger faces several critical socio-political upheavals that continue to test its stability: a) Ethnic tensions between the central government and Tuareg, a nomadic group inhabiting the north, have led to several rebellions since independence (Kisangani, 2012). The most recent conflict began in 2007, with lingering security concerns in the region. b) The Islamist extremist group Boko Haram, terrorizing neighboring Nigeria, has also spilled over into Niger, leading to violence and displacement (Ngomba, 2022). c) Niger consistently ranks among the countries with the highest levels of food insecurity globally (FAO, 2023). Droughts, erratic rainfall patterns, and a rapidly growing population all contribute to this challenge. d) Niger consistently
ranks among the lowest in the world on Human Development Index (HDI), which considers life expectancy, education, and income (UNDP, 2023). This reflects the challenges of poverty, limited access to education, and high infant mortality rates. e) Life expectancy in Niger is among the lowest globally, at around 62 years (World Bank, 2023). This is linked to factors like malnutrition, limited access to healthcare, and high rates of infectious diseases. f) Transparency International ranks Niger consistently low on Corruption Perception Index (CPI), indicating a high level of perceived corruption within the public sector (Transparency International, 2023). This hinders development efforts and erodes public trust in institutions. g) Niger struggles with high rates of child mortality, maternal mortality, and infectious diseases like malaria and HIV/AIDS (WHO, 2023). Limited access to healthcare services further exacerbates these challenges.

Although statistics paint a concerning picture, it’s crucial to recognize the resilience and resourcefulness of the Nigerien people. Niger boasts a rich cultural tapestry, with diverse ethnic groups and vibrant traditions. The music scene is particularly renowned, with genres like Hausa praise-singing and Tuareg blues reflecting the country’s cultural richness (Rasmussen, 2022). Entrepreneurship flourishes in the informal sector, with many Nigeriens relying on small businesses and trade for their livelihood (Potts, 2007). However, opportunities are often limited, particularly for women and youth, who face significant challenges in accessing education and employment. The path forward for Niger is complex, with several key challenges to address. These challenges include a) Promoting stability and security: this has to do with addressing ethnic tensions, mitigating the effects of Boko Haram insurgency, and strengthening democratic institutions. These are crucial for creating a stable environment conducive to development. b) Enhancing food security: this involves investing in sustainable agriculture practices, water management infrastructure, and social safety nets. These steps are essential not only to improve food security but also to reduce malnutrition. c) Combating corruption: this implies strengthening governance institutions, promoting transparency, and holding officials accountable all of which are critical to tackling corruption and ensuring resources are used effectively. d) Investing in education and healthcare: this has to do with expanding access to quality education and healthcare services for all, particularly in rural areas; this is vital for improving life expectancy and empowering citizens. e) Niger requires international support and collaboration to tackle these challenges. Partnering with development agencies, fostering foreign investments that prioritize social responsibility, and addressing climate change’s impact on the region are crucial for propelling the country towards a more sustainable and prosperous future.

The recent coup in Niger, on July 26, 2023, throws the country’s complex path towards transcoloniality into sharp relief. Transcoloniality, as explored by scholars like Agbakoba, goes beyond decolonization, acknowledging the enduring legacies of colonialism in power structures and resource exploitation. France’s colonial rule in Niger (1900-1960) left a significant mark. Resource extraction, particularly uranium, became central to the French economy, with limited benefits for Niger (Gervais, 2018). This exploitative model, Gegout argues, continues in a neocolonial form, with French companies still dominating uranium extraction (Gegout, 2018). A crucial question arises; can military coup be truly justified? To answer this question, let’s take a look at government dissolution in the philosophy of John Locke. Locke (1689) opined that the state or the government has three fundamental roles to play in the society for its citizens. The government should protect the three fundamental human rights of the citizens such as right to life, liberty and ownership of property. When the government fails to protect these fundamental human rights, the citizens have the right to rebel against such a government. Given the above reasoning, military junta is highly justified since the rationale behind its’ actions is grounded in the infringement of these three inalienable rights. The coup is justified, as presented by the military junta, and this hinges on this perception of continued French exploitation and its inability to address pressing issues like insecurity and the failure of previous regimes to revitalize the economy of the country. The military junta claims that previous civilian governments, often seen as corrupt and beholden to foreign interests, failed to address these security threats effectively (Elischer & Mueller, 2019). This resonates with the critique of transcoloniality - that former colonial powers often maintain undue influence, hindering genuine African solutions. Nevertheless, justifying the coup is complex. While frustration with insecurity and perceived French exploitation is understandable, military intervention disrupts the democratic process.

Through the lens of transcoloniality, however, two fundamental questions arise. First, was Democracy Failing?
Niger’s pursuit of democracy has been a long and arduous struggle, punctuated by military coups and persistent anxieties about backsliding. While the country transitioned to civilian rule in 1999, the promise of a stable and prosperous democracy remains largely unfulfilled. Democracy in its current form, has failed to deliver on its core tenets in Niger, leaving its citizens disillusioned and vulnerable. Given that the fragility of Niger’s democracy is rooted in its historical context, the 1996 and 1999 coups, documented in studies by scholars like Gregoire Anani (2023), disrupted the nascent democratic process and instilled a culture of political instability. This constant threat of military intervention undermines the legitimacy of elected governments and discourages long-term planning. Furthermore, Niger grapples with the pervasive issue of corruption. Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index consistently ranks Niger among the most corrupt countries globally (Transparency International, 2023). The embezzlement of public funds stifles economic development and deepens social inequalities. Ordinary citizens witness the misappropriation of resources meant for essential services like education and healthcare, fostering a feeling of powerlessness and resentment against the political elite (Gyimah-Boadi, 2021).

Beyond corruption, democratic backsliding under civilian rule further erodes public trust. Scholars like Volpi, (2013) highlight instances where elected officials have manipulated electoral processes, restricted press freedoms, and cracked down on voices of dissent. These actions undermine the core principles of democracy, such as free and fair elections, and raise concerns about the commitment to democratic ideals. (Akumah & Osuagwu, 2023). The most damning indictment of Niger’s democracy lies in its inability to address the country’s most pressing challenges. Jihadist violence in the Sahel region continues to destabilize the country, displacing communities and hindering economic development (Devermont & Harris, 2020). Despite pronouncements by the government, the security situation remains precarious, highlighting the limitations of democratic institutions in tackling such complex issues. The recent coup in July 2023 serves as a stark illustration of the disillusionment with democracy in Niger, while the military junta claims to be restoring order and a path towards a stable and accountable government.

This latest development underscores the need for a critical reevaluation of the current democratic model in Niger. Given that democracy is unable to restore stability in the country, what then is the way forward? Meanwhile, a second question beckons: Is military rule the answer? History offers cautionary tales. Military regimes can be just as susceptible to corruption and repression (Decalo, 1997). The true test will be whether the junta prioritizes genuine security solutions, democratic reforms, and a reduction of French influence, all crucial aspects of transcolonial transformation.

The idea of Afro-constructivism as championed by thinkers like Agbakoba (2008), emphasizes African agency in tackling challenges. It entails taking responsibility for security and development. In the Nigerien context, this translates to owning security solutions that are peculiar to them since afro-constructivism critiques so much reliance on external forces for security. The junta’s promise to address insecurity without French intervention resonates with this principle. However, success hinges on building a capable national army, fostering dialogue with rebel groups, and addressing the root causes of conflict, such as poverty and marginalization. Also, building development on Niger’s terms given that afro-constructivism advocates for development models that address Niger’s specific needs, not those imposed by former colonial powers, is critical. This will necessitate investment in 1) sustainable resource management that is Niger should negotiate fairer resource extraction agreements with foreign companies to ensure a larger share of profits benefits the country’s development (Koos & Basedau, 2013); 2) Diversification of the economy since overreliance on uranium makes Niger vulnerable to price fluctuations. The junta should prioritize diversifying the economy by investing in agriculture, renewable energy, and tourism since the emphasis of transcoloniality is on positive creativity. 3) Again, Niger can embody transcoloniality through intercultural dialogue since transcoloniality promotes intercultural dialogue as a way to move beyond colonial hierarchies. 4) Niger can work with neighboring countries like Chad and Mali to address regional security threats like Boko Haram through joint military operations and intelligence sharing. 5) Niger can also diversify its partnerships by engaging with emerging powers like China and India for investment and technology transfer, reducing dependence on France.

The path towards a transcolonial Niger is fraught with challenges. These include: 1) internal divisions: Ethnic
tensions and political instability can hinder progress. The junta must prioritize national reconciliation and inclusive governance to achieve lasting security. 2) Economic dependence: this is because Niger remains reliant on foreign aid and resource extraction. Diversifying the economy and improving transparency in resource management are crucial. 3) Military accountability: The junta must demonstrate its commitment to a return to civilian rule through a transparent roadmap for elections. Despite these challenges, we strongly believe that there is a transcolonial future for Niger Republic although the recent coup in Niger presents a complex scenario within the framework of transcoloniality. While frustration with insecurity and French influence is understandable, the success of the military junta hinges on its commitment to, firstly, handle security issues which can be achieved by addressing the root causes of conflict and building a capable national army. Secondly, the military junta should adopt Afro-constructivist development model that prioritizes Niger’s needs for sustainable resource management, economic diversification, and responsible governance. Thirdly, transcolonial Niger will be the one that would espouse interculturality by engaging in regional and international partnerships on a more equal footing. Only by embracing these principles can Niger truly move towards a transcolonial future, one where it takes ownership of its security, development, and unique place in the world.

**Evaluation of Nigerien experience of Transcoloniality**

The Nigerien experience compels a critical reevaluation of the potential of transcoloniality for Africa’s emancipation. Although, the legacy of French colonialism casts a long shadow, Niger’s resource wealth and cultural vibrancy offer fertile ground for a transcolonial future. The recent coup, though it seems like a disruption, presents an opportunity to dismantle neocolonial structures. It raises questions like ‘can the junta prioritize Afro-constructivist development or shedding dependence on French aid and resource extraction practices that enrich foreign corporations at the expense of Niger’s people’? Will the political actors in the military government foster intercultural dialogue to address internal divisions and forge regional partnerships for shared security? The answers to these questions will determine if Niger transcends the extractive logic of colonialism or remains entangled in its web. Transcoloniality, if embraced thoughtfully, offers a path towards a self-determined Niger, one that claims its rightful place in the global arena. However, the road ahead demands a vigilant citizenry, holding the junta accountable for its promises and ensuring a genuine return to civilian rule. Only then can Niger truly step into its transcolonial future, a future built on self-reliance, cultural renaissance, and equitable partnerships.

The future of France’s political engagement with Niger remains uncertain. Several factors will likely shape this relationship. First, the ongoing security challenges in the Sahel region, including terrorism and violent extremism, will likely necessitate continued French military cooperation with Niger. Second, the effectiveness and transparency of French development aid will be crucial for fostering a more equitable partnership if and only if France will be transparent. Third, addressing the environmental and social costs of resource extraction, particularly uranium, is essential for a sustainable relationship and the views of the Nigerien public towards France will significantly influence the nature of the engagement. Fourth, growing anti-French sentiment could lead to a reevaluation of the relationship. By all indications, France’s political engagement with Niger has been a complex and often controversial affair. While France has provided crucial support in areas like security and development, concerns about neocolonialism, resource exploitation, and human rights violations remain.

**Concluding Reflections**

The African experience, for too long defined by the scars of colonialism, is on the cusp of a paradigm shift. The burgeoning concept of transcoloniality offers a powerful framework for African nations to transcend their colonial past and step into a future of self-determination, collaboration, and cultural resurgence. As exemplified by the case study of Niger, transcoloniality is not a utopian ideal, but a practical path towards a more equitable and prosperous Africa. Niger, a land of stark beauty and immense challenges, embodies the complexities of the postcolonial struggle. The recent military coup, while it is unsettling, can be seen as a symptom of a deeper yearning for autonomy – a yearning that transcoloniality can address. By moving beyond the limitations of both isolationism and blind dependence, Niger, and Africa as a whole, can forge a new path.
The core tenets of transcoloniality – Afro-constructivism, intercultural dialogue, and a commitment to dismantling neocolonial structures – provide a potent formula for empowerment. Afro-constructivism compels African nations to take ownership of their development narratives, crafting solutions that address their unique needs and aspirations. Intercultural dialogue fosters collaboration on a foundation of mutual respect, enabling African nations to engage with the world as equals, not former colonies. The path forward will undoubtedly be arduous. Deep-rooted challenges like poverty, ethnic tensions, and political instability persist. However, the very act of questioning the status quo, as evidenced by the Nigerien coup, is a testament to the continent’s growing agency. The success of transcoloniality hinges on a collective and concerted commitment from African leaders, intellectuals, and citizens alike. Leaders must prioritize the well-being of their people above all else, fostering inclusive governance and nurturing a sense of shared purpose. Intellectuals must provide the philosophical frameworks and critical analysis necessary to navigate this complex terrain. And citizens must hold their leaders accountable, demanding transparency and participation in shaping their nations’ destinies.

The African experience of transcoloniality, as illuminated by the case of Niger, is a narrative of hope and possibility. It is a call to shed the shackles of the past and embrace a future defined by self-determination, collaboration, and a vibrant cultural renaissance. As Africa transcends its colonial past, it stands poised to become a powerful player on the global stage, an active participant in shaping a more just and equitable world order. The journey will be long, but the potential rewards are immeasurable. Africa’s time has come; the twenty-first century is, indeed, the century of Africa.

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