

Research Article

NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF WESTERN MEDIAS' INFLUENCE IN FRANCOPHONE AFRICA

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Abstract:

This article titled "Negative Effects of Western Media's Influence in Francophone Africa", discusses the cultural, political, and security repercussions of Western media domination on French-speaking African societies and communities. Based on postcolonialism and media imperialism theories, it argues that Western media continues to be a stealthy tool of neocolonial control, framing African realities using Eurocentric narratives and eroding indigenous languages, traditions, and cultural identities. As it is, this phenomenon generates a cultural dependency whereby Western values are adopted by local audiences as universal standards, thereby minimizing self-representation and fostering an alienation from the local heritage.

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Among the major issues of this report is structural dependence of Francophone African media organizations on Western wire agencies, including AFP and Reuters. Mainly due to chronic underfunding, infrastructural breakdown, and a lack of professional training, a vast majority of local media organizations opt to reproduce stories prepared by external sources rather than working up original stories about themselves and their communities. This kind of dependence reproduces information hierarchies, excludes African voices, and discourages the emergence of strong, pluralistic media spaces. Furthermore, it is also in line with that of long-standing "pluralist authoritarian" regimes, inasmuch as foreign media dominance and domestic political pressures both operate against the emergence of independent journalism.

This article also considers the security implications of such dependence. Sensationalized representations of extremism and violence, borrowed wholesale from Western media, can potentially enhance fear, provide terrorist agitators with discursive material, and obscure underlying socio-political grievances that drive radicalization. In this way, foreign media influence not only distorts global and local perceptions of terrorism in Africa but also potentially entrenches cycles of insecurity.

By intertwining these strands of neocolonial reproduction, structural dependency, security destabilization, and cultural erosion, the research underlines the necessity of strengthening African informational sovereignty. The research advocates for targeted policies to increase investment in local media production, expand journalistic training, and support Pan-African cooperation in news reporting. These are needed to reduce reliance on foreign agencies and to advance narratives rooted in African perspectives, nuance, and aspirations. Without such reforms, Francophone Africa remains vulnerable to the reaffirmation of neocolonial hierarchies and the recycling of instability through externally controlled media discourses.

Keywords: media, stereotypes, double standard, negative impact, disinformation/misinformation, interference, instability, information sovereignty, neocolonialism

1. Introduction

The Francophone African media landscape is the product of complex historical and structural dynamics that well surpass local circumstances. While African countries have made considerable advances in developing their own media structures, they are deeply inscribed in ongoing global asymmetries in information production, exchange, and consumption. Western media outlets such as AFP, Reuters, BBC, CNN, and France 24 hold a powerful voice in shaping both international and international discourses. This kind of power is not by accident but is a product of historical colonial ties, economic disparities, and technological inequalities that allow Western institutions to act as primary definers of what constitutes "news" regarding Africa. On the surface,



transnational media flows are described as globalized and neutral forces of access to information and global interconnectedness and enhanced democracy. However, more critical examination attests that they are heavily politicized processes. The concentration of media power in Western institutions reflects cultural hierarchies and amplifies asymmetrical power relations between the Global North and the Global South. In Francophone Africa, a continent historically defined by French colonialism, this disproportion has particularly sharp implications. Media is no longer merely a tool of communication but an instrument through which symbolic domination and neocolonial domination are organized.

This presentation seeks to critically examine the negative impacts of Western media presence in Francophone Africa on four closely related aspects. First, loss of cultural identity, whereby the sheer persistence of stories from the West displaces local languages, traditions, and forms of knowledge. Second, the neocolonial reproduction, with Western media as a soft power tool to continue asymmetrical political and economic relationships long after formal colonial rule had ended. Third, structural dependency of national media systems, suffering from chronic underfunding and infrastructural susceptibility, reliant on Western agencies for news production and dissemination, quieting local voices in practice. Fourth, exacerbating insecurity and terrorism, the fact that sensationalist Western media coverage distorts the evolved nature of African conflicts as well as lends credence to extremist narratives and erodes faith in indigenous institutions. To engage with these issues, the discourse is rooted in postcolonial theory, which exposes the ongoing presence of colonial rationalities in discursive and cultural arenas; dependency theory, which illuminates the structural dependence of African institutions and economies upon external powers; and media imperialism studies, which challenge global Western cultural industries' hegemony over constructing values and perceptions across the world. Combined, these theoretical approaches characterize the central point argued in this contribution: Western media in Francophone Africa is as much not an external force covering what occurs as it is a central actor that creates identities, political discourse, and security realities. Its influence is not benign and neutral but rather one of reinforcing historical power differentials hindering African societies from defining and representing themselves. The discussion revolves around three central questions:



1. What are the different tools western media use to perpetuate their dominance in Francophone African Countries?
2. What are the different consequences on Francophone African societies, identities and culture?
3. Can the movement towards multipolar world in a context where francophone African countries are more independent, contribute to a regain of their informational sovereignty?

In exploring these dynamics, this study highlights the urgency of decolonizing media landscapes in Francophone Africa. Understanding the negative consequences of Western media dominance is a first step toward fostering informational sovereignty, strengthening indigenous cultural production, and ensuring that African voices reclaim authority over their own narratives in an increasingly globalized media environment.

2. Methodology

The study employs qualitative research to investigate the undesirable effects of Western media domination in Francophone Africa, that is, cultural degradation, neocolonialism, structural dependency of the media, and the propagation of insecurity and terrorism. The research methodology is guided by the objectives of knowing discursive processes (how Western media represents Africa) and institutional dynamics (how African media systems respond to structural dependency).

The research is based on a critical media analysis approach. Grounded in postcolonial theory (NgũgĩwaThiong'o, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha), dependency theory, media imperialism (Schiller, 1976), and framing/agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), the research examines how Francophone Africa is portrayed in the Western media and how the resulting narratives impact local knowledge, the state, and security. Critical media study allows for the study of both content (what is covered and emphasized) and context (those political, historical, and cultural factors informing these representations).

The principal data sources are: Western media productions: Purposive sample of broadcasts, documentaries, and news from such sources as France 24, RFI, AFP, BBC, and CNN on the topics of Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Cameroon from 2015 to 2025. Specific emphasis is given to reporting of terrorism,



political violence, and social issues in an effort to identify repeated frames, stereotypes, and patterns of representation. The ARTE documentary on Mali-Wagner conflict (2025) is employed as a case study to investigate the promotion of extremist narratives and marginalization of state and civilian narratives.

Local media content: Targeted newspapers, radio, and television media of Francophone African countries are analyzed to measure overdependence on Western agencies and the extent to which imported narratives are merely replicated without being adapted.

Policy documents and official statements: Government pronouncements, media decrees, and bans in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger are examined to understand institutional responses towards restoring informational sovereignty and decolonizing the media order.

Academic and grey literature: Journals, think tank documents, and NGO reports provide historical and contextual underpinnings for media dependency, cultural disintegration, and security processes in Francophone Africa (e.g., Endong, 2023; Frère, 2015; Usacheva, 2024).

The study applies thematic content analysis in determining media representation patterns and their effect on security, political, and cultural dimensions. The analysis is theorized by the following theoretical lenses:

Postcolonial theory is applied in determining Eurocentric framing as well as marginalization of culture.

Media imperialism as well as dependency theory are applied in determining structural dependence on Western news agencies and the implications involved.

Framing and agenda-setting theory are the bases for research on how Western media highlight some narratives (e.g., terrorism, political instability) and silence others (e.g., indigenous perspectives, local government successes).

3. The analysis follows three stages:

Coding: Media content is coded in line with recurring themes such as cultural stereotyping, dependency discourses, and security framing.



Interpretation: The codes are interpreted to investigate the impact on local cultural identities, political legitimacy, and public perception of security issues.

Synthesis: Triangulation of findings with official policy reports, formal speeches, and scholarly literature is used to build an intensive understanding of the dynamics between Western media influence and local media response, particularly within nations that are actively pursuing informational sovereignty.

3.1 Limitations

The study identifies several constraints. First, access to a few local media databases is limited, which can affect the analysis's completeness. Second, thematic analysis provides rich qualitative evidence but does not quantify audience influence, i.e., the scope of media framing on public opinion, so it remains partly inferred. Finally, political sensitivities in countries like Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso may restrict access to some primary sources or the openness of media practices.

3.2 Ethical Considerations

All media content sources viewed here are in the public domain, and caution has been exercised to maintain copyright and intellectual property standards. The research is also an ethical one by critically examining stories without sensationalism of terrorism and violence, without promoting extremist rhetoric.

4. Theoretical Frameworks

- Postcolonial theory (NgũgĩwaThiong'o, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha): highlights how colonial power persists through discourse and representation, not only through economic and military means. Western media continues to construct Africa through a Eurocentric lens, portraying it as a space of crisis, poverty, and conflict.

- Media imperialism theory (Herbert Schiller): emphasizes the global dominance of Western cultural industries and their ability to shape perceptions worldwide. Africa consumes more than it produces in the global media market, reinforcing dependency.

- Dependency theory: explains why local media remain reliant on Western agencies due to structural underdevelopment, limited funding, and lack of access to advanced technologies.



• Framing and Agenda-Setting theory (Maxwell McCombs & Donald Shaw; Erving Goffman): These theories shed light on how media does not only report events but also organizes and prioritizes them. Agenda-setting suggests that the media tells audiences what to think about by emphasizing certain issues over others. Framing theory goes further by analyzing how events are presented—through selective emphasis, metaphors, and narratives—which influences how people think about those issues. In the African context, this means that Western outlets not only decide which aspects of Africa are newsworthy (e.g., terrorism, poverty, corruption) but also frame them in ways that reinforce stereotypes of African incapacity and dependence.

5. Cultural Erosion and Identity Crisis

One of the most sinister consequences of Western media dominance in Francophone Africa is the incremental erosion of African cultural identities. The saturation of Francophone airwaves by Western-produced films, television programs, music, and news broadcasts crowds out indigenous expressions of culture and undermines local systems of meaning. As NgũgĩwaThiong'o (1986) argues, cultural domination is the most enduring form of colonialism because it penetrates the psyche and rebuilds identities from within. Western media does this by universalizing French and English as languages and marginalizing indigenous languages, traditions, and artistic practices. The prevalence of Western idioms in popular culture, fashion, and consumer mentality also suggests the degree to which such cultural shifts have become entrenched, causing intergenerational transmission of knowledge and values to erode.

Empirical studies confirm this trend. Endong (2023) explains that the Cameroonian audio-visual scene has increasingly integrated French and Western programs, causing a disconnect between media content and local cultural realities. This is echoed in Frère's (2015) argument that the development of "pluralist authoritarian" media systems in Francophone Africa has not created more pluralism of ideas, but more dependence on outside narratives. In this case, African voices are overshadowed by Western paradigms, which routinely portray the continent as "backward," "violent," or "corrupt," in a way that perpetuates stereotypes that shape both global and local attitudes. As Якова and Данилина (2024) show through their study of Western media coverage of African military coups, this type of reporting consistently sensationalizes instability without



troubling itself with the socio-political forces underlying it. These discursive formations are not merely descriptive but constitutive—they shape the terms in which Africa is imagined, both by external audiences and by Africans themselves.

The effect of such patterns of representation is two-pronged. First, they ignite desires to Western lifestyles as markers of success, which provokes what Usacheva (2024) identify as a crisis of "information sovereignty." Indigenous groups learn to see themselves through Western eyes, producing cultural alienation and fostering reliance on external validation. Second, they delegitimize indigenous cultural forms, rendering them invisible within global media flows. This is supported by international power struggles, for instance, the spread of Western disinformation campaigns within African media markets, which further destabilize local constructions of identity.

Cumulatively, Western media functions as a tool of cultural neocolonialism in Francophone Africa, pushing out indigenous languages, reinforcing Eurocentric stereotypes, and inducing identity crises that destroy cultural continuity. As Беавоги (2012) warns in his analysis of African media's pendulation "from unfreedom to freedom and back," the pendulum of cultural sovereignty hangs precariously when indigenous stories are habitually eclipsed by external influence. Fighting this erosion includes not only bolstering local media infrastructures but also claiming Pan-African cultural production as a frontline defense against Western hegemony.

6. Perpetuation of Neocolonialism

Western media within Francophone Africa is not only a vehicle of entertainment or a source of objective facts but a soft power strategy instrument. As theorized by Joseph Nye (2004), soft power is the ability of states to attract and persuade others with influence, rather than coercion or force. In Africa, French and other Western media organizations employ soft power to attain geopolitical advantages, copy cultural inequalities, and reinforce neocolonial types of dependency. The general diffusion of France 24, RFI (Radio France Internationale), and AFP across Francophone Africa exemplifies this logic. These media organizations situate themselves as providers of "objective" news but whose reporting is oftentimes in line with French foreign policy agendas, ranging from the legitimization of military intervention in the Sahel to emphasis on stories



of African unrest to justify ongoing French involvement in internal affairs (Endong, 2023).

This influence extends beyond the discursive to the symbolic. Through continuous description of African governments as corrupt, feeble, or dictatorial, Western media delegitimizes African leadership in both local and international audiences' minds. Frère (2015) identifies that African media systems are often structurally reliant on global news agencies, so such portrayals are bound to be replicated unreflectively in African media themselves. The effect is the normalization of dependency: African societies become accustomed to contextualizing their political future through frames preoccupied with Western approbation or disapprobation. Thus, media acts as a tool of symbolic domination, where crisis and incapacity discourses chip away at the legitimacy of local authorities while reaffirming the requirement for Western supervisory functions.

This can't be disentangled from the broader political economy of Françafrique, the durable organization of economic, political, and cultural relations that binds France to its ex-colonies. As Usacheva (2024) is convinced, Africa's struggle for "information sovereignty" remains stifled by the existence of foreign-owned and foreign-controlled media infrastructures. The relay of news from Paris to capital cities in Africa ensures that news of African development, democracy, and security is filtered through Western contexts. These tendencies confirm what Homi Bhabha (1994) calls the persistence of colonial hierarchies in the postcolonial era: while formal independence has been achieved, symbolic domination persists through systems of culture and information.

The reproduction of these hierarchies is also reinforced by global rivalries. For the New York Times (Peltier, Satariano&Chutel, 2023), African media landscapes are currently contested territory where French and US media battle over narrative dominance. Nevertheless, the structural ascendancy of France within Francophone Africa—through established institutional links, linguistic dominance, and mastery of infrastructure—suggests its power continues to dwarf that of emerging actors. What appears is a neocolonial setup in which media is the battlefield and the soft power weapon.

Consequently, Western dominance over African information flows illustrates how colonial logics play out in the absence of formal colonial rule. Through soft power, Western states and institutions are capable of shaping



African publics and elites, ensuring the reproduction of asymmetrical relations. Western media across Francophone Africa is in these respects less a disinterested referee of truth than a principal tool of neocolonial order reproduction.

7. Structural Dependency of Domestic Media Systems

Francophone African media institutions operate in an underdevelopment environment of constant shortages of financial resources, inadequate infrastructure, and the lack of professional development. Structural vulnerability makes it extremely difficult for indigenous media to compete with the well-resourced and technologically advanced news operations of international media outlets. As a result, newspapers, radio, and TV stations tend to reproduce AFP, Reuters, and other Western sources' stories, usually without modification or contextual adaptation (Frère, 2015). **In doing so, they inadvertently allow foreign agencies to be the first definers of African reality and to transmit already filtered news from Africa through Western editorial prism.**

This reliance results in a shortage of local perspectives in media coverage. Francophone Africa's government, advancement, and security issues are covered not according to the day-to-day African societies but from Paris, London, or New York. African audiences are thereby given representations of themselves and their world filtered through overseas orientations, which accentuate crisis, instability, or dependency (Endong, 2023). This screening distorts local and international images of African realities and perpetuates stereotypes that make other stories impossible.

This scarcity of finances also undermines journalistic independence. With limited budgets, local media entities are not able to finance detailed investigative journalism or keep correspondents in various regions. They prefer to buy pre-packaged information from international agencies, while keeping a cycle of dependency that prevents strong, independent journalism from emerging. As Usacheva (2024) reminds us, this structural weakness creates an "information sovereignty deficit," where African states and societies do not have the absolute control over narratives moving within their own territories.

It is a vicious cycle: the more foreign based are African media, the less incentive there is to put money into domestic media infrastructure, and the more entrenched foreign control becomes. Over time, this creates an underfed media



ecosystem that is not autonomous, does not generate vibrant local reporting, and cannot fulfill its democratic role of holding those in power accountable. Moreover, as Beavogi (2012) further observes, the African media is perpetually alternating between moments of comparative freedom and re-imposition of restraint, but structural dependency ensures that information freedom is never real.

Structural dependency, then, is more of a political than a technical limitation. It reflects and re-creates the global disparity in the flow of information, placing African media in the role of consumers rather than producers of intelligence. Unless there is intentional investment in national infrastructure, education, and independent funding, Francophone African media cannot be rescued from foreign control and will not be in a position to represent effectively African realities.

8. Media Influence and Terrorism

One of the most disturbing aspects of Western media power in Francophone Africa is the way it constructs narratives of insecurity and terrorism—sometimes in ways that misrepresent local realities and even deepen instability. The dominant model has a tendency to focus on sensationalized violence, exaggerating extremist views while silencing the voices of the most impacted. This dynamic is forcefully illustrated by the ARTE Reportage "Mali: la résistance contre Wagner," which, while offering unprecedented insight into frontline realities, also illustrates how reporting framing can inadvertently accord legitimacy to militant actors by unevenly highlighting their viewpoints.

Western media prefer sensational visuals of war—pictures of mercenary violence, drones bombing targets, and displacement imagery—without emphasizing sufficient context regarding the socio-political origins of violence. Such framing reduces multifaceted crises into simplistic spectacles and ignores the underlying root causes like economic disenfranchisement, political marginalization, or meddling by outside agents. This focused approach redefines popular knowledge of African brutality as an immutable and alien "Other"—a stereotype condemned by Fair (1993) and Frère (2015) as an oversimplification of the continent.

The ARTE documentary takes close-ups of Front de Libération de l'Azawad (FLA) fighters, individuating militants through concentrating their



narrative. Humanizing one's viewpoint in this way risks conferring tangential legitimacy on forces historically linked to destabilizing conflict, potentially aiding extremist recruitment. Terrorist movements likely interpret such access as legitimation—applying media reports to transmit their ideological reach and recruit alienated players in search of identity or grievance. Hoffman (2017) cautions that unrestricted media access can thus become part of the extremists' propaganda climate.

Another effect of Western media framing is the undermining of public confidence in local institutions. By covering very much from militant sources, media outlets can unwittingly present African authorities as incompetent or intrusive when faced with terrorist threats. In the ARTE documentary, the overarching narrative is about the FLA's quest, while the voice of the Malian government or the civilian population—who are the main victims—suffers by comparison. It undermines the legitimacy and authority of state actors in the perceptions of both local and international publics, especially when coupled with consistent coverage depicting governments as inept or in cahoots. Yakova&Danilina (2024) observe that such portrayals are one component of delegitimizing African statehood, in assuring that outside intervention is the sole solution.

Western media, in the value placed upon violence, militants' statements, and state weakness, not only symbolizes insecurity—it builds its image and delivery. In casting extremist voices, lowering local-lived realities, and lowering state capabilities, media reporting creates the feedback loops that increase fear, nourish radical narratives, and compound governance crises. As Endong (2023) and Usacheva (2024) argue, this tension points to a broader problem of information sovereignty—African societies' lack of capacity to self-mediate their own stories and discourses of security.

9. Toward Decolonizing African Media

The perpetuation of Western dominance over information flows in Francophone Africa has generated growing resistance among states and societies determined to reassert their media sovereignty. Decolonizing African media entails the deliberate deconstruction of structural dependencies and the cultivation of alternative structures that favor African voices. Emerging trends in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso provide seminal examples of this shift. These



states, in their quest for greater sovereignty, have gone from rhetoric to take tangible steps like the banning and suspension of France 24 and RFI within their territories. These steps point to the realization that media power is not neutral but intensely political, being an extension of neocolonial power.

A critical component of this struggle is investing in local media industries. African media have long been rebuked for relying on AFP, Reuters, or France 24 for content because of their chronic underfunding and infrastructural shortcomings. By curbing the dominance of these foreign agencies, Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso highlight the urgent necessity to reinvest in local media ecosystems. Strengthening local newsrooms, training journalists, and enhancing digital platforms are necessary if African media are to develop independent reporting capacities rather than reinforcing Eurocentric narratives (Frère, 2015).

At the regional level, Pan-African collaboration is key. As Endong (2023) and Usacheva (2024) emphasize, it is only collective institutions that can counterbalance the structural hegemony of Western media giants. Experiments in the Sahel show the potential of cross-border coordination, where national bans of Western outlets are paired with common discourses of information sovereignty. The challenge is to consolidate these efforts into lasting institutions that can project African voices onto global platforms.

Decolonization also requires cultural policies that protect indigenous languages and traditions from further marginalization. As NgũgĩwaThiong'o (1986) reminds us, linguistic domination is among the most insidious modes of cultural colonization. Francophone African countries' reliance on French-language media, typically mediated through Paris, has continued to entrench cultural alienation. The prohibitions in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso are not only geopolitical breaks but also symbolic efforts at privileging the local identities and reducing the epistemic dominance of foreign languages and worldview. Promoting broadcasting in local languages and supporting local creative industries are imperative steps towards cultural decolonization.

Finally, the advent of these sovereignty-oriented policies attests to the need for critical media literacy among African publics. Allowing citizens to recognize and interrogate Western agenda-setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) is central to guaranteeing information sovereignty beyond the state to civil society. By contesting Eurocentric portrayals that frame African states as perpetually unstable



or authoritarian, citizens are able to resist internalizing essentialist stereotypes and instead demand narratives that more accurately reflect their lived realities.

Taken together, these actions prove that the decolonization of the African media is not a theoretical objective but a reality in countries like Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. By restricting Western channels' influence, investing in domestic capacity, and promoting Pan-African collaboration, these states are establishing the pillars of informational sovereignty. Yet the path forward requires continued effort: building sustainable media institutions, maintaining pluralism, and ensuring that sovereignty does not result in closed spheres of information but rather in genuinely independent and representative African voices in the world.

10. Discussion

The analysis of Western media's influence in Francophone Africa reveals a closely networked relationship between global media flows, cultural hegemony, and structural dependency. Focusing on postcolonial theory, media imperialism, dependency theory, and framing and agenda-setting theories illuminates how Western media operates not only as an information source, but also as a system of structural and symbolic power. Postcolonial theory highlights that it has not been possible to end colonial inheritances through the achievement of formal political independence, but rather these inheritances persist in the discursive construction of Africa as a crisis-ridden, impoverished, and conflictive space. Western media reproduces these representations, dictating the way African societies perceive themselves as well as influencing global publics' perceptions of the continent.

The results of this discursive dominance are perhaps most deeply experienced in the sphere of cultural deterioration and identity crisis. The ubiquitous availability of Western-produced films, television, music, and news programs drives indigenous language and culture expressions to the margins, while popular culture becomes increasingly a symbol of Western values. As NgũgĩwaThiong'o (1986) contends, cultural domination is one of the longest standing strategies of colonialism because it reconstitutes identities from within. Empirical studies in Francophone Africa support the thesis: Endong (2023) records the Cameroonian television industry's adoption of French and Western programs, introducing disassociation between media productions and domestic realities. Similarly, Frère (2015) attests that "pluralist authoritarian" media



regimes reinforce external narratives rather than advocating genuine pluralism, demonstrating how media infrastructural structural dependency facilitates cultural subordination. Cumulative impact is an identity crisis where African audiences internalize Western frames as the normative standards, which erode cultural continuity and encourage aspirational conformity to outsider lifestyles at the expense of indigenous customs.

Closest to cultural impacts is media perpetuation of neocolonialism. French media such as France 24, RFI, and AFP are instruments of soft power that provide French geopolitical and cultural reach in Francophone Africa. Depicting African leadership as incompetent, corrupt, or inefficient, such media legitimize foreign intervention but delegitimize African leaders. As Usacheva (2024) says, such measures destabilize information sovereignty and reinforce foreign epistemic domination. This is a dynamic consonant with that of Homi Bhabha's (1994) theory of symbolic domination: colonial scales are, in postcolonial societies, reproduced by cultural and informational systems so that African societies remain under externally mediated epistemologies. The global competition, as in the strategic competition to frame narratives by American, French, and Russian media, further exacerbates this asymmetry, with African media and audiences working their way through a complex landscape of mediated representation and soft power interventions.

Local media structural dependence amplifies these effects. Continued underdevelopment, resource constraints, and limited access to technology compel African media to overly rely on Western news agencies, reusing their content without proper localisation (Frère, 2015; Endong, 2023). This dependence curtails the independence of journalists, reduces the variety of stories, and solidifies externally constructed images of African realities. The feedback loop generated by such structural dependency ensures that Western media still established agendas, framed crises, and defined what constitutes the limits of what is worth reporting on, subordinating local publics to epistemologies imposed from the outside.

One of the most notable demonstration of this effect is seen in the coverage of terrorism and insecurity. Western media frequently prioritizes sensationalist depictions of violence and amplifies extremist narratives while marginalizing the perspectives of affected populations and local governments. The ARTE reportage



on Mali's resistance against Wagner illustrates this dynamic: by centering the militants' perspective, the report humanizes actors implicated in destabilizing violence while underrepresenting civilian and state viewpoints (Hoffman, 2017; Yakova&Danilina, 2024). Such framing risks validating extremist actors, undermining trust in local institutions, and reinforcing perceptions of African incompetence. Through combining sensationalized attention, selective framing, and structural media dependence, this emphasizes the role of Western media as an active force in spreading insecurity, rather than a passive observer.

In order to overcome such challenges, efforts at decolonizing African media are now coming into view more distinctly. Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso have taken concrete steps—such as suspending France 24 and RFI—to regain informational sovereignty. Such steps are reflective of the realization that media power is political in nature and must be battled against if African societies need to achieve cultural, political, and epistemic sovereignty. Complementary action involves investments in local infrastructures for the media, Pan-African collaborations to establish independent news agencies, support for indigenous languages and cultural output, and the production of critical media literacy amongst audiences (NgũgĩwaThiong'o, 1986; Endong, 2023; Usacheva, 2024). Collectively, these actions are aimed at shattering dependency cycles, resisting external epistemic control, and opening up space in which African voices are not marginal but central.

The critique reveals that the negative effects of Western media influence on Francophone Africa are interlocking and reinforcing each other. Neocolonial resilience, cultural decay, structural dependency, and the amplification of insecurity are interlocking processes, all driven by the power asymmetries inherent in international media flows. The resolution of these issues requires a multi-pronged approach that includes institutional transformation, regional response, cultural reassertion, and critical audience engagement. It is only through continuing and coordinated effort that Francophone Africa can begin to take back control of its media spaces, narratives, and cultural identity, towards real informational sovereignty and postcolonial self-determination.

11. Conclusion

The influence of Western media in Francophone Africa extends well beyond information transmission; it is a vehicle through which colonial trace is



re-created in the postcolonial era. By discrediting native cultures, promoting neocolonial rankings, sustaining structural dependency, and setting the agendas of insecurity and terrorism, Western media has profound effects on African identities, governance, and opinion. These relations find that the media is not a neutral conduit of information but a political and cultural instrument mediating power dynamics, generally in the service of foreign perspectives rather than local realities.

Overcoming these challenges requires a systemic strategy intended to regain informational sovereignty. Local media infrastructure investment, Pan-African collaboration, promotion of indigenous language and cultural productions, and critical media literacy are required steps in dismantling dependency and constructing independent media landscapes. The experiences of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso indicate that intentional attempts to reassert command over media flows—such as prohibiting certain Western media—can serve as a trigger to broader structural and cultural change. Decolonizing African media ultimately is less about representation; it is a condition for political independence, cultural resistance, and human development. Without such reforms, Francophone Africa stands to be trapped in vicious cycles of outside control, with far-reaching consequences for its ability to tell its own stories and map out its own destiny.

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