

Colonial Legacies and the Globalization Backlash: Experimental Evidence from West Africa

John Does
Bucknell University

International Political Economy Society
Annual Meeting, 2025
Los Angeles, CA

No Backlash in Developing World...Why?



“[W]e challenge scholars to consider why the backlash has not diffused widely to the developing world.”

- Rudra, Nooruddin, and Bonifai (2021)

Research Questions

- ▶ Can we explain the missing backlash against globalization?
- ▶ Does colonial legacy shape it?
- ▶ Can experimental methods uncover legacies of colonial rule?

Literature

- ▶ IPE: Attitudes to Globalization
- ▶ CPE: Effects of Colonization

Colonization and the Backlash

Overview of Argument

- ▶ Do you think globalization is good for Senegal?
- ▶ Do you think globalization **with France** is good for Senegal?

French West Africa: Conquest & Civilizing

French West Africa: Conquest & Civilizing

- ▶ Conquest first, treaties second: “permanent warfare.”

French West Africa: Conquest & Civilizing

- ▶ Conquest first, treaties second: “permanent warfare.”
- ▶ From *assimilation* (subjects → citizens) to *association* (limited recognition).

French West Africa: Conquest & Civilizing

- ▶ Conquest first, treaties second: “permanent warfare.”
- ▶ From *assimilation* (subjects → citizens) to *association* (limited recognition).
- ▶ Tools of rule:
 - *indigénat* : forced labor (corvée), arbitrary punishment
 - centralized authority from Dakar/Paris.

French West Africa: Conquest & Civilizing

- ▶ Conquest first, treaties second: “permanent warfare.”
- ▶ From *assimilation* (subjects → citizens) to *association* (limited recognition).
- ▶ Tools of rule:
 - *indigénat* : forced labor (corvée), arbitrary punishment
 - centralized authority from Dakar/Paris.
- ▶ Civilizing Mission

French West Africa: Conquest & Civilizing

- ▶ Conquest first, treaties second: “permanent warfare.”
- ▶ From *assimilation* (subjects → citizens) to *association* (limited recognition).
- ▶ Tools of rule:
 - *indigénat* : forced labor (corvée), arbitrary punishment
 - centralized authority from Dakar/Paris.
- ▶ Civilizing Mission
 - *targeted* African institutions, customs, languages

Resistance & Accommodation

Resistance & Accommodation

- ▶ Widespread, persistent resistance (1880–1935)
 - Lat Dior, Samori Touré, King Behanzin (Dahomey)
 - Baoulé

Resistance & Accommodation

- ▶ Widespread, persistent resistance (1880–1935)
 - Lat Dior, Samori Touré, King Behanzin (Dahomey)
 - Baoulé
- ▶ European superior organization/technology (Maxim gun)
 - → Shifted balance of power

Resistance & Accommodation

- ▶ Widespread, persistent resistance (1880–1935)
 - Lat Dior, Samori Touré, King Behanzin (Dahomey)
 - Baoulé
- ▶ European superior organization/technology (Maxim gun)
 - → Shifted balance of power
- ▶ “Collaboration” often strategic

Resistance & Accommodation

- ▶ Widespread, persistent resistance (1880–1935)
 - Lat Dior, Samori Touré, King Behanzin (Dahomey)
 - Baoulé
- ▶ European superior organization/technology (Maxim gun)
 - → Shifted balance of power
- ▶ “Collaboration” often strategic
 - diplomacy + alliances = survival

Resistance & Accommodation

- ▶ Widespread, persistent resistance (1880–1935)
 - Lat Dior, Samori Touré, King Behanzin (Dahomey)
 - Baoulé
- ▶ European superior organization/technology (Maxim gun)
 - → Shifted balance of power
- ▶ “Collaboration” often strategic
 - diplomacy + alliances = survival
 - not endorsement but resistance

Language & Cultural Memory

Language & Cultural Memory

- ▶ Colonial languages

Language & Cultural Memory

- ▶ Colonial languages
 - Dominate schooling/governance

Language & Cultural Memory

- ▶ Colonial languages
 - Dominate schooling/governance
 - Indigenous languages marginalized

Language & Cultural Memory

- ▶ Colonial languages
 - Dominate schooling/governance
 - Indigenous languages marginalized
- ▶ Language as power

Language & Cultural Memory

- ▶ Colonial languages
 - Dominate schooling/governance
 - Indigenous languages marginalized
- ▶ Language as power
 - Humiliation & Alienation

Language & Cultural Memory

- ▶ Colonial languages
 - Dominate schooling/governance
 - Indigenous languages marginalized
- ▶ Language as power
 - Humiliation & Alienation
 - Code-switching as resistance

Language & Cultural Memory

- ▶ Colonial languages
 - Dominate schooling/governance
 - Indigenous languages marginalized
- ▶ Language as power
 - Humiliation & Alienation
 - Code-switching as resistance
- ▶ Contemporary shifts: e.g., demoting French

Language & Cultural Memory

- ▶ Colonial languages
 - Dominate schooling/governance
 - Indigenous languages marginalized
- ▶ Language as power
 - Humiliation & Alienation
 - Code-switching as resistance
- ▶ Contemporary shifts: e.g., demoting French
- ▶ Literature/film/music carry memory: Achebe, Ngũgĩ, Sembène, Tiken Jah Fakoly

Language, Literature, and Music

Language, Literature, and Music

***Allah N'Est Pas Obligé* — Kourouma (2007)**

“Et d'abord et un... M'appelle Birahima. Suis p'tit nègre. Pas parce que suis black et gosse. Non ! Mais suis p'tit nègre parce que je parle mal le français.”

Language, Literature, and Music

Allah N'Est Pas Obligé — Kourouma (2007)

“Et d'abord et un... M'appelle Birahima. Suis p'tit nègre. Pas parce que suis black et gosse. Non ! Mais suis p'tit nègre parce que je parle mal le français.”

Tiken Jah Fakoly — *Plus rien ne m'étonne*

Français

Ils ont partagé le monde

Plus rien ne m'étonne

Ils ont partagé Africa sans nous consulter

Ils s'étonnent que nous soyons désunis

Ils ont partagé Africa sans nous consulter!

Sans nous demander ! Sans nous aviser!

English

They divided the world

Nothing surprises me anymore

They divided Africa without consulting us

They are surprised that we are divided

They divided Africa without consulting us!

Without asking us! Without telling us!

Contemporary Channels to Backlash

Contemporary Channels to Backlash

- ▶ External interventions – Libya 2011

Contemporary Channels to Backlash

- ▶ External interventions – Libya 2011
 - Reshaped Sahel security and perceptions

Contemporary Channels to Backlash

- ▶ External interventions – Libya 2011
 - Reshaped Sahel security and perceptions
 - Mohamed Bazoum: eliminating Qaddafi “the mother of all our problems”

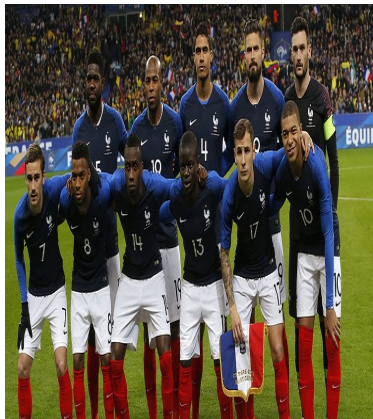
Contemporary Channels to Backlash

- ▶ External interventions – Libya 2011
 - Reshaped Sahel security and perceptions
 - Mohamed Bazoum: eliminating Qaddafi “the mother of all our problems”
- ▶ Anti-French sentiment: military presence, currency (CFA), language dominance

Contemporary Channels to Backlash

- ▶ External interventions – Libya 2011
 - Reshaped Sahel security and perceptions
 - Mohamed Bazoum: eliminating Qaddafi “the mother of all our problems”
- ▶ Anti-French sentiment: military presence, currency (CFA), language dominance
- ▶ Sports as a mirror—World Cup “extraction” narrative

World Cup



“France has pursued success in football [as] it has pursued economic might — through **extraction**.”

“This cherry-picking inclusiveness is also a manifestation of **neo-colonialism**, through which France **extracts human talent** from its former colonies and rejects the rest — the unworthy.”

– Lorenzo Kamel

Neo-Colonial Rhetoric and French Politics

Neo-Colonial Rhetoric and French Politics

- ▶ **President Sarkozy** (Dakar, 2007)

Neo-Colonial Rhetoric and French Politics

► President Sarkozy (Dakar, 2007)

- *"The tragedy of Africa is that the African has not fully entered into history..."*

Neo-Colonial Rhetoric and French Politics

► President Sarkozy (Dakar, 2007)

- *"The tragedy of Africa is that the African has not fully entered into history..."*
- → Portrayed Africans as passive, nostalgic, lacking agency

Neo-Colonial Rhetoric and French Politics

► President Sarkozy (Dakar, 2007)

- *"The tragedy of Africa is that the African has not fully entered into history..."*
- → Portrayed Africans as passive, nostalgic, lacking agency
- → Refused colonial apology: *"Recognition of facts but not repentance."*

Neo-Colonial Rhetoric and French Politics

► President Sarkozy (Dakar, 2007)

- *"The tragedy of Africa is that the African has not fully entered into history..."*
- → Portrayed Africans as passive, nostalgic, lacking agency
- → Refused colonial apology: *"Recognition of facts but not repentance."*

► President Macron

Neo-Colonial Rhetoric and French Politics

► President Sarkozy (Dakar, 2007)

- *"The tragedy of Africa is that the African has not fully entered into history..."*
- → Portrayed Africans as passive, nostalgic, lacking agency
- → Refused colonial apology: *"Recognition of facts but not repentance."*

► President Macron

- Paternalistic remarks on African women's fertility and education

Neo-Colonial Rhetoric and French Politics

► **President Sarkozy** (Dakar, 2007)

- *"The tragedy of Africa is that the African has not fully entered into history..."*
- → Portrayed Africans as passive, nostalgic, lacking agency
- → Refused colonial apology: *"Recognition of facts but not repentance."*

► **President Macron**

- Paternalistic remarks on African women's fertility and education
- Quipped on Sahel mission: *"Je crois qu'on a oublié de nous dire merci."*

Neo-Colonial Rhetoric and French Politics

► President Sarkozy (Dakar, 2007)

- *"The tragedy of Africa is that the African has not fully entered into history..."*
- → Portrayed Africans as passive, nostalgic, lacking agency
- → Refused colonial apology: *"Recognition of facts but not repentance."*

► President Macron

- Paternalistic remarks on African women's fertility and education
- Quipped on Sahel mission: *"Je crois qu'on a oublié de nous dire merci."*
- → Reinforced colonial inequities and resentment

Neo-Colonial Rhetoric and French Politics

▶ **President Sarkozy** (Dakar, 2007)

- *“The tragedy of Africa is that the African has not fully entered into history...”*
- → Portrayed Africans as passive, nostalgic, lacking agency
- → Refused colonial apology: *“Recognition of facts but not repentance.”*

▶ **President Macron**

- Paternalistic remarks on African women's fertility and education
- Quipped on Sahel mission: *“Je crois qu'on a oublié de nous dire merci.”*
- → Reinforced colonial inequities and resentment

▶ **U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton** (CBS News)

Neo-Colonial Rhetoric and French Politics

► **President Sarkozy** (Dakar, 2007)

- *“The tragedy of Africa is that the African has not fully entered into history...”*
- → Portrayed Africans as passive, nostalgic, lacking agency
- → Refused colonial apology: *“Recognition of facts but not repentance.”*

► **President Macron**

- Paternalistic remarks on African women's fertility and education
- Quipped on Sahel mission: *“Je crois qu'on a oublié de nous dire merci.”*
- → Reinforced colonial inequities and resentment

► **U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton** (CBS News)

- *“We came. We saw. He died.”*

Neo-Colonial Rhetoric and French Politics

► **President Sarkozy** (Dakar, 2007)

- *"The tragedy of Africa is that the African has not fully entered into history..."*
- → Portrayed Africans as passive, nostalgic, lacking agency
- → Refused colonial apology: *"Recognition of facts but not repentance."*

► **President Macron**

- Paternalistic remarks on African women's fertility and education
- Quipped on Sahel mission: *"Je crois qu'on a oublié de nous dire merci."*
- → Reinforced colonial inequities and resentment

► **U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton** (CBS News)

- *"We came. We saw. He died."*
- → Seen as callous and condescending

Neo-Colonial Rhetoric and French Politics

► **President Sarkozy** (Dakar, 2007)

- *"The tragedy of Africa is that the African has not fully entered into history..."*
- → Portrayed Africans as passive, nostalgic, lacking agency
- → Refused colonial apology: *"Recognition of facts but not repentance."*

► **President Macron**

- Paternalistic remarks on African women's fertility and education
- Quipped on Sahel mission: *"Je crois qu'on a oublié de nous dire merci."*
- → Reinforced colonial inequities and resentment

► **U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton** (CBS News)

- *"We came. We saw. He died."*
- → Seen as callous and condescending
- → Reinforced perceptions of Western neo-colonialism





Colonization and Globalization

Legacy of French Colonization



Identity-Based Resentment



Less Support for Globalization with France

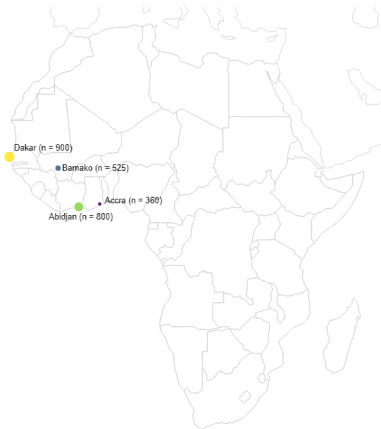
Empirical Analysis

Hypotheses

- ▶ Respondents will be less favorable to **[immigration, investment, trade]** with France compared to other countries.

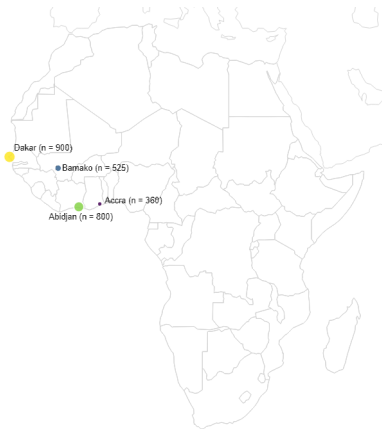
Research Design

Figure 1. Data Collection Locations in West Africa



Research Design

Figure 1. Data Collection Locations in West Africa

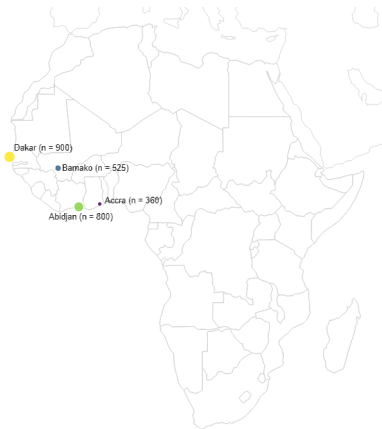


Survey

- ▶ Face-to-face interviews on paper
- ▶ Structured questionnaire on globalization and politics

Research Design

Figure 1. Data Collection Locations in West Africa



Survey

- ▶ Face-to-face interviews on paper
- ▶ Structured questionnaire on globalization and politics

Sampling

- ▶ Cluster sample
- ▶ Enumerator-led random walk selection

Survey Items — Côte d'Ivoire

► Questions

- Immigration: “Do you support immigration from [COUNTRY] to Côte d'Ivoire?”
- Inward investment: “Are you in favor of [COUNTRY] companies investing in Côte d'Ivoire?”
- Outward investment: “Are you in favor of Ivorian companies investing in [COUNTRY]?”

► Randomized country prime

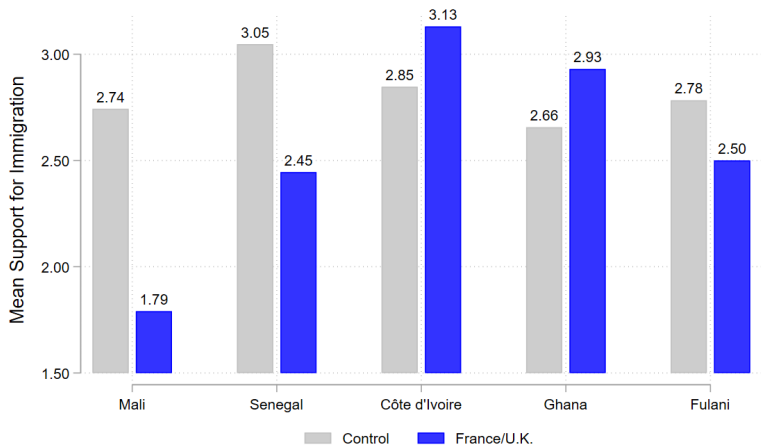
- Former colonizer: France.
- African peers: Nigeria, Mali.
- Non-African: China, United States.

► Response scale

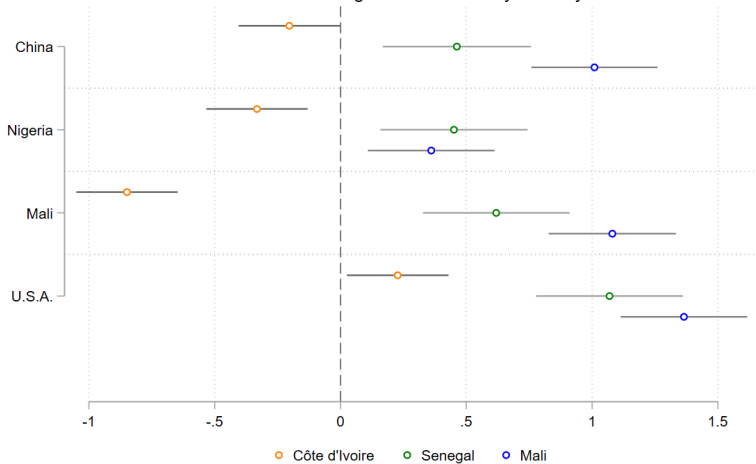
- 4-point Likert: *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *agree*, *strongly agree*.
- No neutral option (to reduce satisficing).

Immigration

Immigration Views by France Treatment and Country

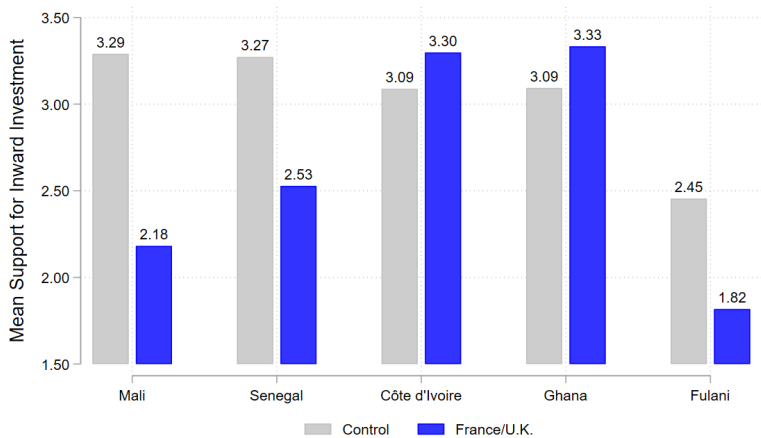


Treatment Effects on Immigration Attitudes by Country and Version

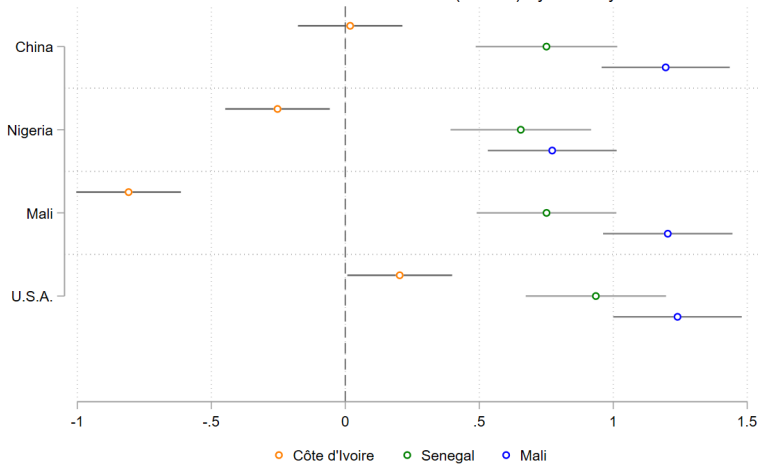


FDI Inward

Investment Views by France Treatment and Country



Treatment Effects on Investment Attitudes (inward) by Country and Version



Extensions

► Extension 1

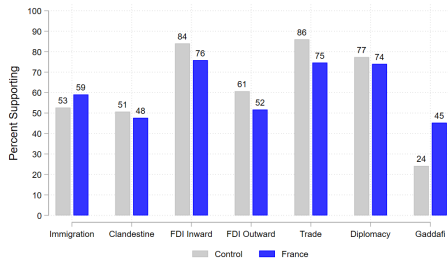
- Pure Control
- Additional Questions
 - Illegal Immigration, Trade, Diplomacy, Gaddafi
 - First word that comes to mind about France

► Extension 2

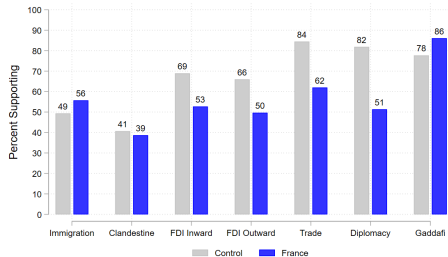
- Prime on Resistance:

"In recent months, large-scale demonstrations have taken place in several West African countries, such as Burkina Faso, Mali, and Senegal, to protest French political and military intervention in the region. Are you aware of these demonstrations?"

Views of Globalization Extended (Côte d'Ivoire)



Views of Globalization Extended (Senegal)



Côte d'Ivoire



Senegal



Regression Coefficients for Positive Outcome

Treatment Condition

Control

France

Sample Site

Senegal

Côte d'Ivoire

-0.2

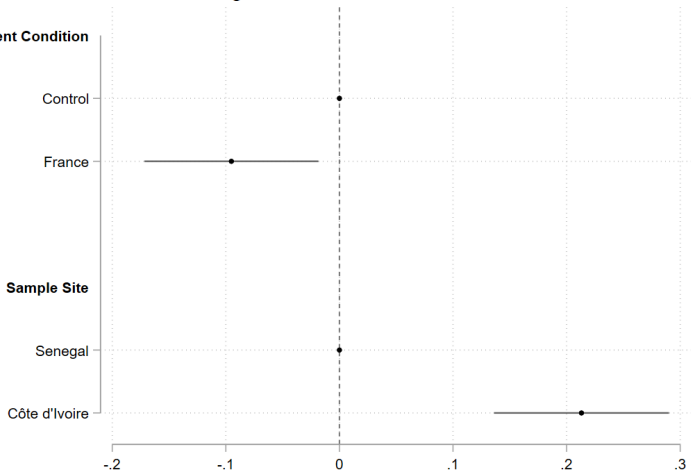
-0.1

0

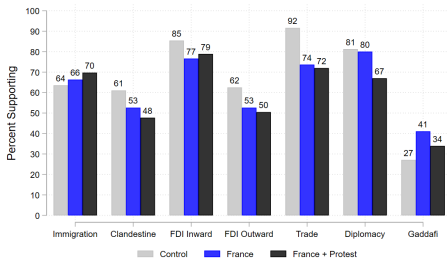
0.1

0.2

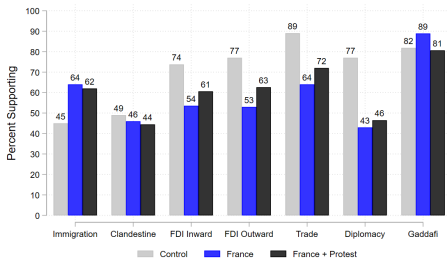
0.3



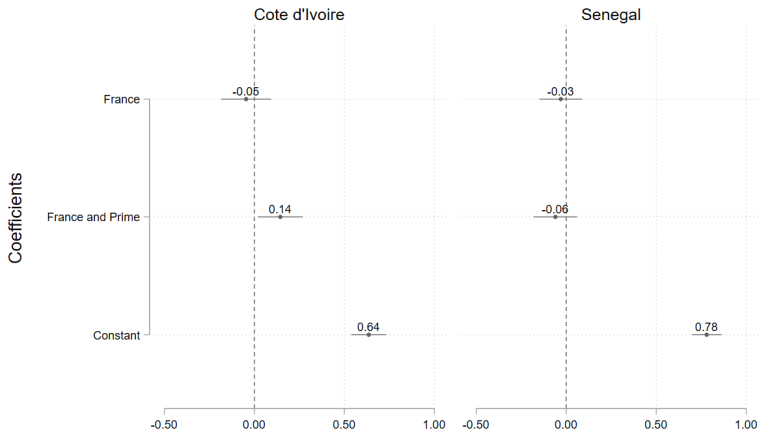
Views of Globalization with Protest Prime (Côte d'Ivoire)



Views of Globalization with Protest Prime (Senegal)



Effect of Treatments on View of Colonization



Discussion & Conclusion

Rethinking Colonization

Rethinking Colonization

▶ **AJR: Colonial Origins**

- Institutions (inclusive vs. extractive) explain long-run development

▶ **My Argument: French Legacy**

- Assimilation, centralization, and cultural domination leave identity-based resentment
- Support for globalization with *France* lower than with U.S. or China

Rethinking Colonization

▶ AJR: Colonial Origins

- Institutions (inclusive vs. extractive) explain long-run development

▶ My Argument: French Legacy

- Assimilation, centralization, and cultural domination leave identity-based resentment
- Support for globalization with *France* lower than with U.S. or China

▶ Key Similarities: Colonization Persists

- AJR: colonization as source of (under)development
- I extend to globalization backlash: colonial memory \Rightarrow selective skepticism

▶ Key Differences

- AJR \Rightarrow structural, political institutions
- My work \Rightarrow attitudinal, relational legacies
- AJR: colonizer type less central; my work: *who* colonized is decisive
- Settler Colonies—e.g., Algeria
 - AJR: Promotes development
 - My work: Exacerbates colonial effect

Rethinking Globalization

► Evidence (4 countries)

- Mali/Senegal: baseline > 75% support, sharp drops with France framing
- Senegal: investment 83% → 51%; trade 84% → 62%
- Côte d'Ivoire: weaker effect; Ghana: none ⇒ backlash is *conditional*, not universal

► Backlash Beyond the West

- Emerges in former colonies where imperialism still shapes attitudes
- Globalization should be read through *colonization*, not economics alone

► Theory

- Who you globalize with matters (cultural framing)
- A “colonial discount factor” dilutes perceived benefits

► Liberal Order

- Colonial histories erode legitimacy; rivals can leverage them
- Sustain order by acknowledging history and decouple from neo-colonial practices

► Policy

- Design policy without meddling/paternalism
- Material benefits with moral legitimacy

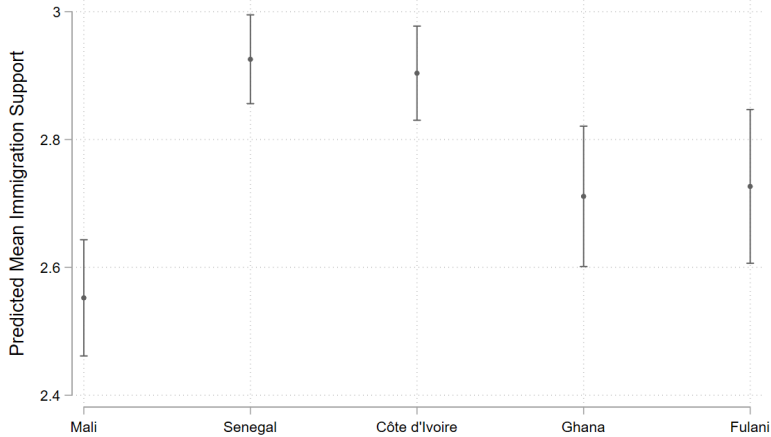
Appendix

Descriptive Statistics

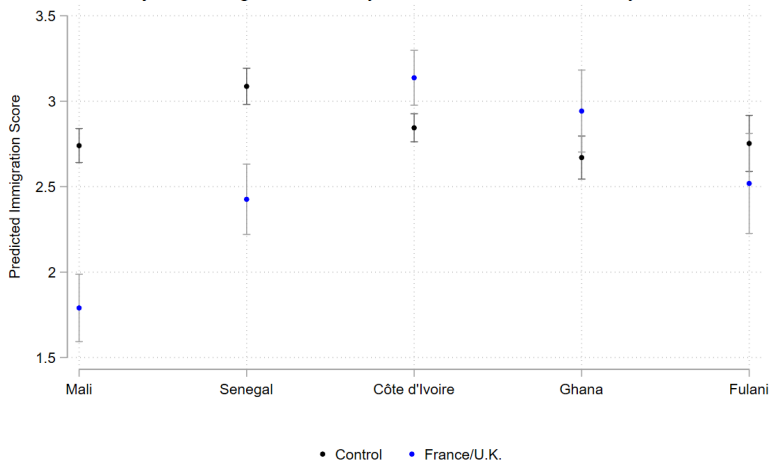
Descriptive Statistics, by Country					
	Mali	Senegal	Côte d'Ivoire	Ghana	Fulani
Outcome Variables					
Immigration	2.55	2.93	2.90	2.71	2.73
Investment In	3.07	3.12	3.13	3.14	2.33
Investment Out	2.85	3.07	2.95	2.85	2.45
Sample Characteristics					
Income Mean (n)	93 (525)	125 (562)	123 (800)	95 (360)	106 (62)
Income (min-max)	8-500	0-550	0-800	0-1,300	20-400
Age Mean	41	37	34	34	38
Age (min-max)	18-88	18-88	18-84	18-119	18-80
Number of Children (mean)	1.8	2.4	1.7	1.6	3.2
Number of Children (min-max)	0-10	0-11	0-8	0-13	1-11
% Male	52%	56%	50%	52%	58%
Education (n)					
% High school or less	40% (208)	24% (219)	26% (212)	40% (144)	78% (222)
% High school	38% (199)	39% (348)	49% (391)	40% (144)	12% (35)
% University (some)	22% (118)	37% (333)	25% (196)	20% (71)	10% (32)
Religion (n)					
% Christian	28%	14%	43%	70%	0%
% Muslim	61%	82%	47%	23%	100%
% Animist	2%	1%	1%	2%	0%
% Not Religious	8%	2%	8%	3%	0%

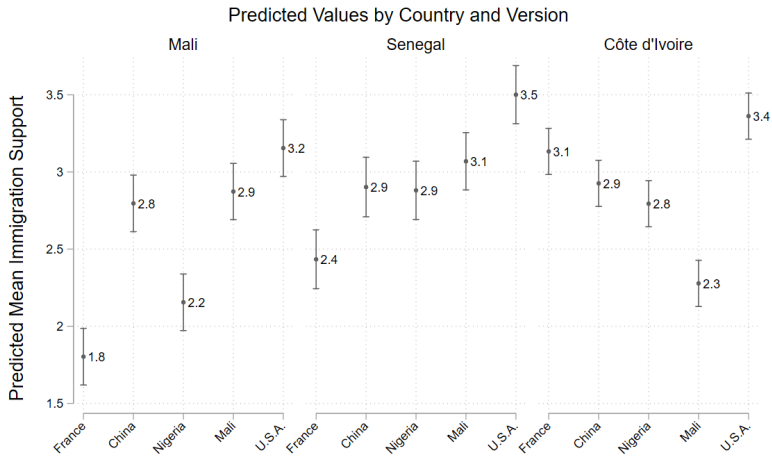
Notes: Income is reported in local currency—CFA francs for Senegal, Mali, and Côte d'Ivoire; Ghanaian cedi converted to CFA for Ghana. Percentages are rounded.

Views of Immigration by Country

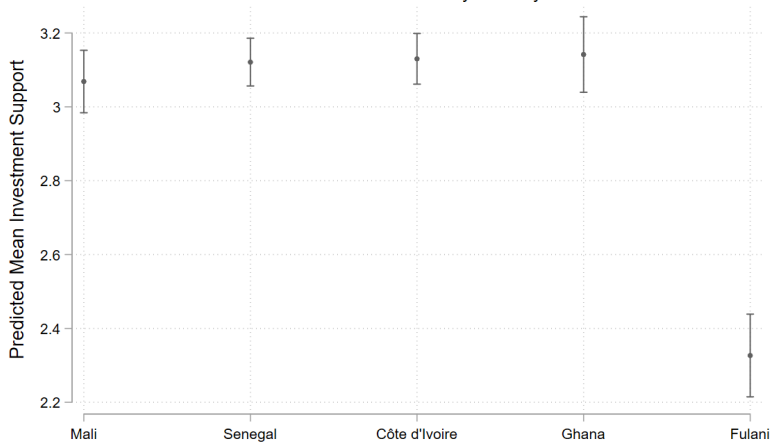


Adjusted Immigration Views by France Treatment and Country

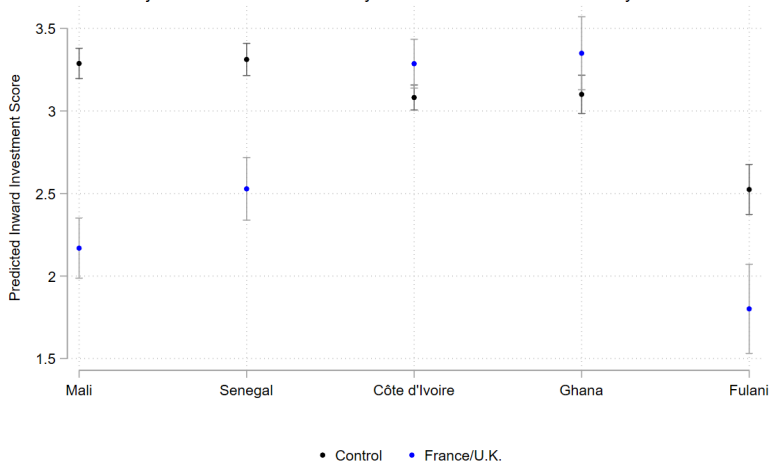


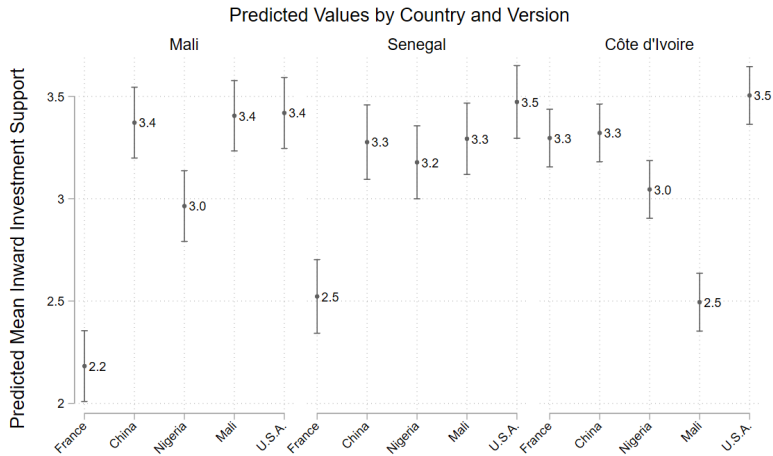


Views of Inward Investment by Country



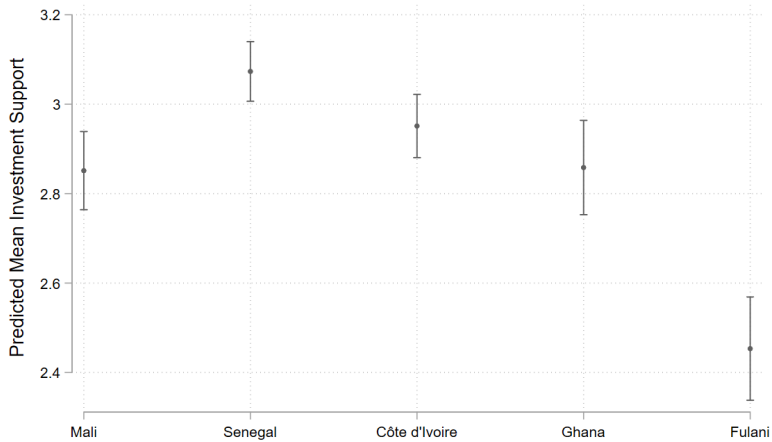
Adjusted Investment Views by France Treatment and Country



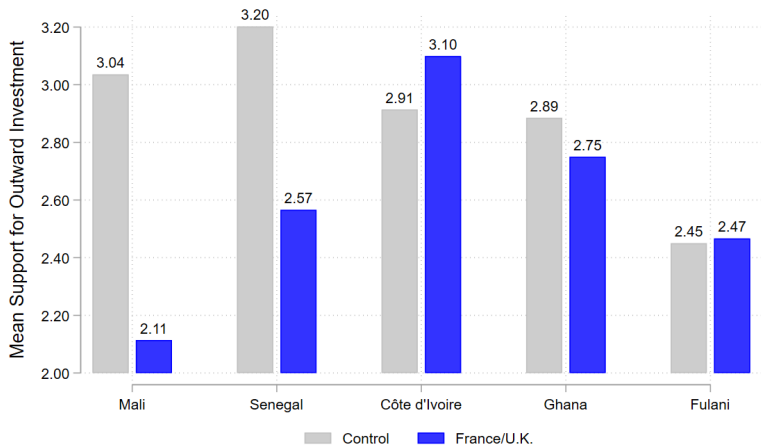


FDI Outward

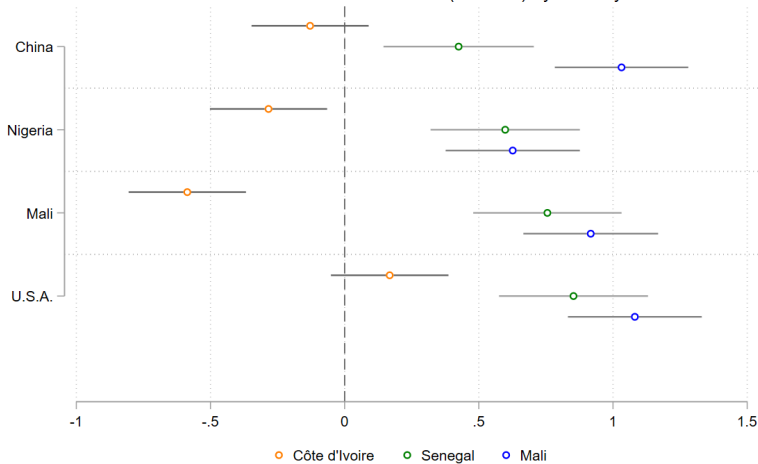
Views of Outward Investment by Country



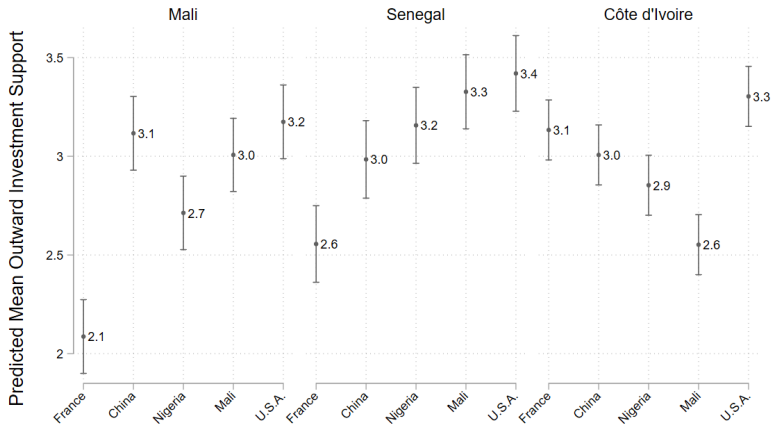
Investment Views by France Treatment and Country



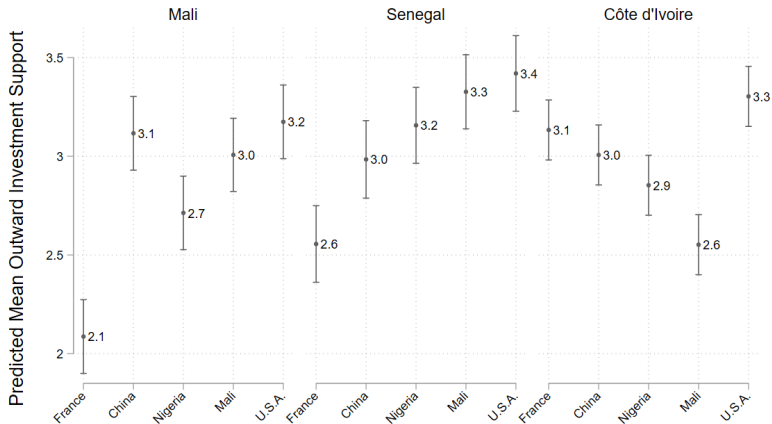
Treatment Effects on Investment Attitudes (outward) by Country and Version



Predicted Values by Country and Version



Predicted Values by Country and Version



Additional Survey Items

► Questions

- Immigration: “Do you think illegal immigrants [control/from France] in Senegal should be sent back to their country of origin?”
- Trade: “Do you think the Senegalese government should try to encourage international trade [control/with France]?”
- Diplomacy: “It is essential that Senegal work [with other countries/work with France] to solve problems such as hunger, overpopulation and pollution.”
- Intervention in Libya: “Did you agree with [control/France’s decision] to oust Muammar Gaddafi from power in 2011?”

Literature Review

International Political Economy

- ▶ Agnolin, Colantone, Stanig (2025)
- ▶ Autor, Dorn, Hanson, Majlesi (2020)
- ▶ Ballard-Rosa, Malik, Rickard, Scheve (2021)
- ▶ Ballard-Rosa, Goldstein, Rudra (2024)
- ▶ Bergh, Kärnä (2021)
- ▶ Bisbee, Mosley, Pepinsky, Rosendorff (2020)
- ▶ Bonifai, Nooruddin, Rudra (2021)
- ▶ Broz, Frieden, Weymouth (2021)
- ▶ Burgoon (2009)
- ▶ Castañeda, Shemesh (2020)
- ▶ Colantone, Stanig (2018)
- ▶ Colantone, Ottaviano, Stanig (2025)
- ▶ Hainmueller, Hopkins (2014, 2015)
- ▶ Margalit (2012; 2019)
- ▶ Mansfield, Milner, Rudra (2021)
- ▶ Mansfield, Mutz, Silver (2015)
- ▶ Milner (2021)
- ▶ Naoi (2020)
- ▶ Pinto (2013)

Comparative Political Economy

- ▶ Acemoglu, Johnson, Robinson (2001)
- ▶ Boms (2017)
- ▶ Bruhn, Gallego (2012)
- ▶ Easterly, Levine (1997)
- ▶ Grier (1999)
- ▶ Laitin, Ramachandran, Walter (2019)
- ▶ Lee, Paine (2024)
- ▶ Michalopoulos, Papaioannou (2016)
- ▶ Nunn (2008)
- ▶ Nunn, Wantchekon (2011)
- ▶ Olsson (2009)