

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

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Abstract. In many Western countries, there is an intense and enduring backlash against globalization. Yet, across the developing world resistance to globalization has been much less visible. What explains this difference? This paper argues that colonial legacies help account for the missing backlash in the developing world. In West Africa, colonization was not a passive but rather a contested process, and an often violent one, leaving behind memories of exploitation and resistance. These experiences and memories shape how globalization is perceived today. When globalization is linked to the former colonial power, it is more likely to engender resistance than when it is associated with non-colonial partners. To test this argument, I conducted survey experiments in four West Africa countries: two ‘most-likely’ cases where colonial resistance is strong (Mali and Senegal) and two ‘less-likely’ cases (Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana). Across multiple measures of globalization, and several variations of the survey experiment, the results show that references to the former colonial power reduces support for globalization, with the most pronounced effects in Mali and Senegal. These findings suggest that the colonial history conditions how societies respond to globalization and help to explain why the backlash appears in some cases and not in others.

Since the end of the Cold War, globalization has produced an enduring and intense backlash. From WTO street protests to the rise of populist movements, the processes that constitute globalization have generated widespread angst and animosity (Stiglitz 2002). Interestingly, this resistance is generally most prevalent in advanced democracies (Broz, Frieden, and Weymouth 2021)—the countries that have backed globalization in the post-World War II era (Colantone, Ottaviano & Stanig 2022; Walter 2021)—and it is increasingly linked to right-wing, anti-immigration parties (Mansfield, Milner, & Rudra 2021). In contrast, opposition to globalization is said to be far less intense across the developing world. A 2003 Pew Research Center report, aptly subtitled “Globalization with Few Discontents?” found that majorities in Cote d’Ivoire, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, and Uganda viewed globalization as “very good” for their country, whereas in Western Europe the highest level of support was 37 percent in Germany. Fifteen years later, this sentiment persisted: a 2018 Pew study concluded that emerging-market populations are more likely to link trade to more jobs and better wages. Rudra, Nooruddin and Bonifai (2021) have challenged scholars to explain this robust support, and specifically why the backlash against globalization has not diffused beyond wealthy, Western countries. Why, then, do we not see a backlash against globalization in developing countries?

Explaining this divergence remains a core puzzle in international political economy. This paper addresses it in a West African context. I argue that a substantial backlash to globalization exists in the developing world, one that becomes apparent when we apply a deep historical lens and ask more nuanced questions about globalization. Survey items framed in broad and “coarse” terms (Naoi 2020)—such as Pew’s 2018 prompt, “Growing trade and business ties with other countries is a good/bad thing for our country”—inevitably produce relatively positive responses in developing countries still struggling with extreme poverty and scarce opportunities for people

to lead better lives. Yet, a closer look at globalization's multiple dimensions reveals long-standing resistance, especially in West Africa, where trade, investment, and migration were frequently imposed by external powers. From the slave trades through colonial rule, the historical record I argue shows that Africans have pushed back against externally driven economic integration. When those legacies are acknowledged—and when we recall that today's proponents of globalization are those that once colonized these places—then we can see that globalization emerges as a deeply contested process, one that can and does provoke fierce opposition.

The key point to this paper's argument is that globalization in many African countries has been shaped and constrained by the legacy of colonization. While colonization had multiple motivations, and was in many ways "unplanned" (Fieldhouse 1966, p. 179), one central purpose was economic, including access to resources: first, gold and slaves, and then later palm oil, tobacco, and tea. In pursuit of these resources, colonial powers implemented measures that ensured their continued control—manipulating trade routes, coercing labor, forcing production of cash-crops, and monopolizing investment. As a result, the processes typically associated with globalization—trade, investment, and migration—were not neutral or mutual but instead heavily directed and controlled by colonial interests, often by force and the prospect or application of violence. This pattern was especially pronounced in French West Africa, where France pursued a policy of assimilation for their subjects (Conklin 1997; Crowder 1962), attempting to make their subjects 'French' in identity and behavior. For the French, this included investments in infrastructure and education designed to facilitate commerce and support their broader goals attached to the so-called 'civilizing mission'. But the colonial mission was built on domination and degradation, producing profound and lasting harm in many cases. The resistance to colonization—as detailed in this paper—was deep and abiding, and its effects are still visible

across West Africa and many other parts of the developing world today. In this context, globalization has often been less a global project than a continuation of colonial control, locking African countries into systems they neither designed nor governed. That legacy of control has bred resentment and disillusionment with the global systems and their own political institutions and processes, as many Africans remain aware of their controversial past and the limited access they have to the supposed benefits of trade, investment, and migration in the global order. To this point, Huntington (1996, 51) famously said: “The West won the world not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion (to which few members of other civilizations were converted) but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence. Westerners often forget this fact; non-Westerners never do.”

When it comes to how people view globalization today, I argue that given this historical record perceptions are likely shaped by a framing effect—specifically, who the globalization process is perceived to involve. In reality, even for major powers like China, the U.S., or France, globalization is not perfectly global but rather in most cases it is specific to certain countries. Given this reality, asking Americans how they feel about international trade in general versus say trade with China is likely to elicit very different responses. The same dynamic holds true—perhaps even more strongly—I argue for African countries, where attitudes toward globalization, especially migration and investment, are often conditioned by colonial legacies. In this context, people are more likely to exhibit a backlash toward globalization when it is connected to the former colonial power, in this case France. When globalization is not framed in terms of that historical relationship, individuals may be less inclined to resist. Part of the puzzle of the so-called “missing backlash” to globalization, then, lies in understanding *who* is seen as the agent of globalization. While globalization is seen as a borderless, multilateral world, for many countries it remains

deeply hierarchical and tied historically and practically to their colonial past. When it comes to attitudes to globalization, these ties matter.

To test this argument, I conducted a series of experiments in West Africa. I chose three former French colonies—Cote d’Ivoire, Senegal, and Mali—and one former British colony—Ghana—to test the hypotheses. The cases of former French West Africa were chosen as most likely to exhibit a backlash against France (Mali and Senegal) to less likely (Cote d’Ivoire). As a former British colony, Ghana serves as a control as British colonization and de-colonization has been different than that of the French. The expectation is that Ghana is the least-likely case of all four samples. Finally, the Fulbe, or Fulani, a pastoralist ethnic group located across the Sahel were also included as a rural sample of a group that is historically tied to trade over long distances. The experiments were a series of simple surveys in which the questions about globalization asked to respondents were randomized by the former colonial power versus several other countries including China and the United States.

The results show that framing questions about immigration and investment around France relative to other countries shapes views of globalization, pushing people to be less supportive of these processes of integration. However, this is true for the samples in Mali and Senegal but less so for Côte d’Ivoire, and even less so for Ghana where there is no evidence of a backlash effect. Extending the initial results, a second and third round of testing indicates that using a pure control does induce more of a backlash effect in Côte d’Ivoire and continues to show the robust nature of the results in Senegal. Moreover, in the study’s extensions additional questions about illegal migration and trade were added to the survey indicating less reaction about immigration but a very strong reaction about trade. Finally, questions about the political nature of globalization—including a question about the NATO mission that ousted Gaddafi from power in 2011—show that

respondents are relatively more likely to exhibit responses indicative of a backlash when framed around France. Over-all, the results show there is support for the notion that the colonial past shapes views of globalization today, although there is nuance to this story.

This paper makes several contributions to the literature. First—and perhaps most importantly—it offers a partial answer to the question of why there appears to be no widespread, or at least a much less intense, backlash against globalization in developing countries. What the findings here suggest is that people desire and demand the opportunities globalization provides, but they do not want the external control that has historically accompanied economic integration between Western countries and those in developing countries. If we take a broader view of globalization, stretching back to Columbus's voyages, if not even earlier, it becomes clear that in places like West Africa, participation in the global economic system has often been defined by coercion and force. Thus, to understand contemporary public opinion, we must separate the process of globalization from its implementation. When we do so, it is clear that support for globalization is conditional on the colonial past. While people might endorse the idea of integration, they might not agree with how it has been executed past and present. For a long time, powerful countries and associated international institutions have compelled people in the developing world to engage in a version of globalization that they played little part designing and implementing. This has created a paradox as both the backlash against and support for globalization can exist simultaneously. Second, this paper shows that if globalization is to remain viable, it must be shaped by all parties involved. Without inclusive participation, people are likely to reject a system they see as externally imposed and one designed to benefit those at the top. Third, as former colonies seek to move beyond their historical ties, many are increasingly turning to new partners, China and Russia especially. Scholars of international relations and international

political economy should reflect on how these findings not only affect views on globalization, but also broader attitudes toward the global order, an order still largely defined by former colonial powers.

In what follows, I present a discussion about how the colonial process in West Africa encouraged resistance that would persist to influence views of globalization today. Following this discussion, I present the research design and empirical results. I conclude with a discussion of the implications of this research and some ideas for future research.

Colonization and the Backlash

Scholars date the emergence of globalization to various historical points—e.g., Mansa Musa’s Hajj in 1324 (French 2021), Columbus’s voyage in 1492 (Mann 2011), the French Revolution in 1789. For many scholars, it is not a recent process, but one that has been evolving for centuries (Wallerstein 1974). In 1919, John Maynard Keynes (1919, p. 9) famously noted not only the historical presence of globalization, but also its benefits, when he said that a Londoner could, from bed, “order by telephone...the various products of the whole earth.” Voltaire, similarly, praised the benefits of this “commerce” in his *Letters on the English Nation* as enriching and freeing the English, yet, he also wrote in *Candide* (2022, p. 68) about its exploitative side, noting slavery’s horrors as the price of “sugar in Europe.” Slavery, colonization, and globalization are connected, as seen in the ‘triangular trade’ in which goods and people crossed Europe, Africa, and the Americas. Globalization, as Veracini (2022, p. 33) notes, is “everywhere”—and “colonization brought it there.” As Saint Dominque—now Haiti—shows, today’s global south has long been embedded in global exchange through systems of trade, investment, and migration, often through violent and extractive means. Globalization has come in waves, much prior to World War II (Castañeda and Shemesh. 2020).

Colonialism is often framed as a process driven by economic motives—trade, profit, and exploitation of resources (Veracini 2022, p. 20). Lenin (1916) called imperialism the highest stage of capitalism, a view shared earlier by Hobson (1902). Yet, while economic considerations dominate the narrative, especially in the humanities, they do not alone explain colonial expansion (Fieldhouse 1966, p. 381). Although resource extraction—oil, minerals, rubber, ivory, slaves—was central to the colonial mission, broader claims of systematic economic exploitation remain contested.¹ Alternative explanations stress sociological and ideological motives. Schumpeter, for example, rejected Lenin’s argument, viewing imperialism as an urge to dominate rather than exploit (see Uzoigwe 1985, p. 18-20). Other explanations emphasize Social Darwinism and racial ideologies, which frame colonization as a natural consequence of European superiority (Uzoigwe 1985, p. 21). Evangelical Christianity added a missionary aspect to this process, mixing conversion and paternalism. Diplomatically, empire-building advanced national prestige, protected strategic locations, and preserved the European balance of power. Crowder (1968) described colonization as ‘nibbling’—reactive and gradual—and African resistance, including efforts to preserve the slave trade, as with King Gezo in Dahomey, often provoked further European intervention. Uzoigwe (1985, p. 27) thus emphasizes the interaction between European ambitions and African responses, including political collapse and the shift from slavery to legitimate trade.

Ultimately, then, there does not exist a single “colonial process” (Fieldhouse 1966). France, for example, governed Tunisia as a protectorate, Algeria as a department, and while certain

¹ Yield gaps between colonial and European bonds were minimal at around 0.5%, and many ventures like the British South Africa Company, paid no dividends for decades (Fieldhouse 1966 p. 387). While labor was underpaid this was relative to European wages, and it still exceeded prevailing local rates. Fieldhouse (1966 p. 390) argues that returns reflected colonial supply-demand conditions rather than colonialism exploitation. France illustrates this point: in 1870, French investors had little appetite for colonial investments and French politics was dominated by domestic rather than foreign concerns and by 1914 just 1% of French foreign investment went to Black Africa (Wesseling 1997).

themes emerged in the colonial process, including strategic, ideological, and humanitarian imperatives that often out-weighed capitalist interests (Wesseling 1997). Colonizers sought to remake societies in their own image in order to secure control and to promote their security (Doyle 1986). Inspired by Enlightenment ideals and the French Revolution of 1789, their mission was declared formally at the Berlin Conference (1884-1885), where colonizers committed to civilizing Africans. Kipling's "White Man's Burden" captured colonization as a moral duty to "civilize" colonized peoples, a view embraced later the United States too (Easterly 2006; Immerwahr 2019; Kagan 2006). Humanitarian justifications—like ending slavery—were central to justifying the mission. Article 6 of the General Act of the Berlin Conference committed the signatories to "bind themselves to watch over the preservation of the native tribes...to help in suppressing slavery...bringing home to them the blessings of civilization." Yet moral imperatives were often more about gaining direct political control (Green 2020). The colonizers were motivated by resources—e.g., gold, ivory, and slaves—but their interest and exposure to Africa preceded colonization by hundreds of years and their ambitions extended beyond profits to geopolitical concerns, institutional reform, and the desire to end slavery.

Africa's partition of Africa is often located to the Berlin Conference, with France's protectorate in Tunisia (1881) and British occupation of Egypt (1882), colonial conquest preceded these events, especially in West Africa. France was at the lead of the process. In 1870, France took control of the Senegalese hinterland (Wesseling 1997, p. 9). Stimulated less by economics and more by the humiliation from its defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, French colonization was often unplanned—as in Algeria—or aimed at restoring national prestige and containing internal unrest including socialist forces (Wesseling 1997, p. 14). French colonial policy evolved over time. Economist Paul Leroy-Beaulieu envisioned colonies as outlets

for capital rather than people, while Jules Ferry formalized the mission in multi-dimensions, including as an outlet for surplus goods and capital, a humanitarian objective to ‘civilize’ the natives, and, most importantly, to avenge France’s devastating loss to Germany (Wesseling 1997).

French colonization in West Africa relied on military conquest, with treaties playing a secondary role. Uzoigwe (1985, p. 35-36) details campaigns in which the French defeated key figures like Lat Dior (1886), Mamadou Lamine, and Samori Touré, and by 1894 the French conquered Dahomey. Crowder (1964, p. 76) notes that force, not diplomacy, defined France’s control of Western Sudan—modern Mali, Upper Volta, Niger, Mauritania, and Guinea—laying the foundation for infrastructure like the Senegal-Niger railway. In Senegal, Governor Louis Faidherbe’s² especially harsh tactics—emerging from his experience in Algeria—set the precedent for military domination (Fieldhouse 1966, p. 214; Pakenham 2015). Later governors, like Ernest Roume (1904), defined colonization as a civilizing effort, one rooted in moral and material progress, centered on trade and infrastructure development (Conklin 1997, p. 51) while Gabriel Angoulvant (1906) emphasized development through “pacification,” (Handloff 1991). France’s penetration of the western Sudan was achieved through “campaigns of conquest” and “permanent warfare” with the ultimate objective of connecting Algeria, French West Africa, and French Congo into one federation (Wesseling 1997, p. 185).

France believed its colonies were indivisible extensions of the republic. Assimilation policies sought to erase differences, through a unified tariff system, centralized governance, French Assembly representation, and importantly by spreading the 1789 Revolution’s principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity (Fieldhouse 1966, p. 308; Handloff 1991). Eventually, France was forced to shift to a policy of association (Fieldhouse 1966, p. 318), permitting indigenous customs if they

² Faidherbe served twice as Governor of Senegal from 1854-1861 and 1863-1865.

aligned with French interests and did not undermine French superiority. Early attempts at assimilation can be seen in Louis XIV's *Code Noir*, which codified rules for slaves, including their existence as property and forced conversion to Catholicism. The indigénat system, a widely despised system, implemented across its colonies, institutionalized colonial subjugation: customary law, arbitrary punishment, imprisonment without trial, forced labor (*corvée*), and disenfranchisement (Conklin 1997; Handloff 1991; Mann 2009). Mercantilist restrictions mandated trade solely with France using French ships (Fieldhouse 1966, p. 306-315). Promises of citizenship never materialized, preserving an empire of 'subjects,' not citizens (Fieldhouse 1966 p. 315).³ Under the Third Republic, political figures like Jules Ferry and Léon Gambetta promoted colonization to secure a liberal order and to secure France's global status, believing that Revolutionary ideals could transform African societies into a democratic space (Wesseling 1997; Conklin 1997; Pakenham 2015).

In its pursuit of prosperity and civilization, French officials identified African institutions as obstacles to progress. Governor-General Joost Van Vollenhoven, for example, had little regard for African cultures and sought specifically to eradicate African feudal institutions (Conklin 1997, 185-187). This attitude reflected the French Revolution's anti-feudalism, an essential part of the Revolution, seen in the decrees of the National Assembly abolishing seigniorial rights, and the 'mission civilisatrice' which aimed to replace indigenous languages, slavery, customary law, and feudal chiefs with republican values: liberty, equality, legal justice, and a common language (Conklin 1997). Fundamentally believing in the superiority of French civilization, Governor

³ Jackson (2013, p.116) notes Britain made the same false promises of assimilation. Ranajit Guha (1998, p. 85) describes the lingering pain of colonial India as wrapped up in these broken promises, as well as forced labor and arbitrary taxation. Despite perceived differences, French and British colonial rule in West Africa were similar in practice: both appointed loyal chiefs, keeping intensive control over "backward" populations (Fieldhouse 1966, p. 321).

William Ponty prioritized education—in French—not just to uplift but to ensure that the colonized could understand France’s civilizing efforts to create progress (Conklin 1997).

Africans, of course, resisted colonization. Boahen (1985) notes that from 1880 to 1935, most African leaders “vehemently opposed” colonialism and fought to maintain their sovereignty. Broad-based grievances—shared across rural and urban, educated and uneducated, poor and rich—fostered a broader anti-colonial consciousness (Boahen 1985). Rotberg and Mazrui in *Protest and Power in Black Africa* (1970, p. xviii) argue that the Western norms and power applied to African societies were questioned and resisted almost universally, with resistance giving way to rebellion in many cases. In West Africa, resistance shaped colonial encounters (Crowder 1964). The French pushed railroads, seizing land, thus provoking fierce opposition from the likes of Lat Dior, Mahmadou Lamine, Samory Touré (who fought 13 battles and moved his empire 600 milometers), and King Behanzin of Dahomey. Though Dahomey initially signed treaties with the French (1851-63), conquest under General Dodds followed. The Mossi Empire was also first engaged diplomatically and then militarily. Their King, Wobogo, resisted: In 1895, the Moro Naba, or Mossi King, famously said of the French, “But I find my country good just as it is. I have no need of them...Go away now, and...never come back” (Crowder 1964, p.97). However, securing control of the Mossi was vital for labor extraction in resource-rich but sparsely populated Lower Volta (Côte d’Ivoire) amid competition with the British, Germans, and Portuguese (Crowder 1964, p. 83-111; Green 2020; Mamdani 2018). Even with treaties and conventions—like the Anglo-French conventions of 1889 and 1898—French conquests of places like Macina, Timbuktu (1894), and Chad relied on force and divide-and-rule tactics. The people in Côte d’Ivoire, especially the Baoulé, resisted until Gabriel Angoulvant launched a full-scale campaign in 1908, seeking to overcome opposition to “progress” (Crowder 1964). Pre-colonial empires—Ghana, Mali,

Songhai, Sokoto—fueled powerful resistance, yet French West Africa (AOF), centralized under the Governor-General in Dakar, employed relentless violence, disrupting traditional life, coming as Crowder (1964, p. 111) notes “at great expenditure of human life” and proving too powerful for the resistance.

Over time, however, things had changed and disparities between the Europeans and Africans had developed. The ‘Atlantic’ revolutions—the Glorious, Industrial, French, American, Haitian—had reshaped global politics, and new technologies such as the steamship, railway, telegram, Maxim gun all accelerated imperial expansion. Imperialism, capitalist monopolies, and intensifying rivalry amongst the European powers defined this period, and in this context, many African nations, Boahen (1985) notes, accepted European rule—sometimes reluctantly, often out of necessity. African leaders who accepted European rule, which most did eventually, were framed as “collaborators”. This framing, however, is inaccurate and underestimates the total resistance that prevailed as many leaders sought to preserve their sovereignty by any means necessary, including by forming strategic alliances with the Europeans. Resistance was thus not only direct confrontation, and diplomacy, pragmatism, and compromise were also tactics of confrontation and survival. Boahen (1985) thus cautions that the label “collaborator” carries pejorative connotations that disguises the realities faced by African leaders who were in their diplomatic efforts practicing resistance, albeit different from violent confrontation. King Tofa of Porto Novo, for example, was surrounded by three enemies: the Dahomey (Fon) Empire to the north, the British on the coast, and Yoruba to the north-east. The French were “god-sent” for King Tofa, providing an opportunity for protection. Thus to call Tofa a collaborator or one who did not resist ignores his broader situation. As Boahen (1985, p. 12) writes, “...the dichotomy between resisters and so-called collaborators is not only mechanistic but simply unconvincing.”

Nevertheless, resistance in whatever form, while pronounced, ultimately failed. African leaders miscalculated European organization and firepower, and the Maxim gun and breach-loading rifle shifted the balance of power. In a battle with the French, Samori lost 900 men to France's loss of two fighters (Wesseling 1997, p. 184). Resisters such as Lat Dior, Prempeh, King Behazin, and Cetshwayo of Zulu were killed, while Lobengula died in flight. Perhaps most important in this struggle, Crowder (1964) notes that Africans could not unite against the French, a recurring weakness in African responses to colonial encroachment. Although foreign rule was widely seen as destructive—as depicted in Chinua Achebe's famous novel *Things Fall Apart*, and documented by Crowder (1964, pp. 72-73)—some African groups saw European rule as preferable to subjugation by rival African empires. The Fanti and the Hausa each preferred British rule to the Asante and Fulani respectively (Azumah 2014; Crowder 1964). They valued the peace and educational opportunities—e.g., Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone— and consumer goods that followed the end of the slave trades (Boahen 1985).

While colonization brought benefits—roads, infrastructure, schools—its primary aim remained access and exploitation of African labor and resources. As such, colonization had critical demographic effects, including entrenching rural—urban divides. Many African leaders, both traditional and educated, sought to address the abuses of colonial rule: force labor, high and arbitrary taxation, compulsory cultivation of cash crops, land alienation, pass laws, pricing distortion, racial segregation, and poor access to education and healthcare. In 1883, France declared Porto Novo a protectorate—but notably this occurred at the request of King Tofa, who remained under threat from Dahomey and the Yoruba, while British incursions and Catholic Missionary pressures loomed. France soon expanded its reach by placing other areas like Grand-Popo under its control (Crowder 1964).

Contemporary Effects of Colonization

Colonization in Africa left enduring legacies. From violent conquest and forced labor to the often corrupt and inept post-colonial state, the effects of colonization persist to our contemporary world. The violence of colonization is perhaps best exemplified in the wars between the British and the Asante in Ghana, in the Congo under King Leopold's rule (Hochschild 1998), or in the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya (Elkins 2005). Colonization left psychological scars. Franz Fanon, in the *Wretched of the Earth*, called it a "systematic negation" of their humanity. Scholars of political economy highlight the persistent long-run effects of colonization on contemporary economic development (Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson 2001; Bruhn and Gallego 2012; Easterly and Levine 2016; Grier 1999), and political outcomes, including democracy and the quality of governance (Broms 2017; Olsson 2009). Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2016), moreover, show that partitioned ethnic groups suffer more intense and prolonged conflicts. Colonization—and slavery before—undermined trust and stifled productivity (Nunn 2008; Nunn and Wantchekon 2011).

Language is an enduring aspect of the colonial legacy. Despite more than fifty years of independence, colonial languages still dominate African education, governance, and life in general, marginalizing indigenous ones. To date, no African country uses an indigenous language for secondary or higher education (Laitin and Ramachandran 2016), and this has costs: educational outcomes in Cameroun have been shown to improve when African languages are used at school (Laitin and Ramachandran 2016; Laitin, Ramachandran, and Walter 2019). The persistence of colonial languages is in many ways unsurprising given that language is inherently political, a form of control as seen in the 1976 Soweto uprising where young black students in South Africa protested forced learning in Afrikaans and English, leaving hundreds of them dead. Today, the

backlash targets language specifically.⁴ Mali's 2023 Constitution demoted French (AfricaNews 2023) in favor of national languages, a symbolic yet powerful example of decolonial resistance (Avi-Yonah 2023).⁵ While this shift distances Mali from French colonialism, it could also alienate other groups, such as the Peuhl and northern populations, due to the prominence of Bambara in and around Bamako (Avi-Yonah 2023).

More than is often realized, languages are political (Alalou 2006). India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, said that language can be integrating and disintegrating (Siwach 1987). Language, as Ekeh (1975) suggested, creates mental spaces with divergent expectations about thought and behavior, and now with globalization, languages like English, French, and Spanish dominate, a process referred to as linguistic imperialism (Phillipson 1992), which can alienate those being dominated. In *The Colonizer and The Colonized*, Memmi observes that all anyone "hears and uses [is] the colonizer's language" and thus "the colonized feel like a foreigner in his own country" (p. 107). Frantz Fanon (1994) in *A Dying Colonialism* claimed, similarly, that French, "language of occupation, a vehicle of the oppressing power," humiliated Algerians, framing every utterance as "an order, a threat, or an insult" (p. 89). Colonial languages are thus seen as "standard", while African ones inferior (Zeng, Ponce & Li 2023). This hierarchy was central to the colonial civilizing mission, which locked Africans in a language imposed upon them (Conklin 1997). Yet, the use of indigenous languages has been a fact of life since the colonial period. Wole Soyinka (2012) in *Of Africa* recounts how the Mende used their own language to exclude the colonizers, a phenomenon known as 'code switching' (Bailey 1999). To prevent rebellions, slaves were grouped across ethnic lines rather than within them to minimize

⁴ This trend first started in North Africa, e.g., Morocco (Angrist and Lavy 1997)

⁵ Article 31 of Mali's new constitution states, "The national languages are the official languages of Mali...French is the working language," whereas Article 25 in the 1992 Constitution stated, "French is the official language of expression."

coordination and collective action (French 2021). Language thus wields power, especially when it is exclusionary. It is a signaling device, a social technology, influencing human thinking and behavior (Ginsburgh and Weber 2020). Aspects of language, including linguistic distance, have been found to affect macro-economic processes, such as international trade (Melitz and Toubal 2014), and decisions about where to emigrate (Adsera and Pytlikova 2015).

Language shapes our worldview and interactions. Nelson Mandela said, “If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language that goes to his heart.” The dominance of the colonial language has consequences. In *Decolonising the Mind* Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o (1986, p.17) says:

“The language of an African child’s formal education was foreign. The language of the books he read was foreign. The language of his conceptualization was foreign. Thought, in him, took the visible form of a foreign language. So the written language of a child’s upbringing in the school...became divorced from his spoken language at home. There was often not the slightest relationship between the child’s written world, which was also the beginning, and the world of his immediate environment in the family and community. For a colonial child, the harmony existing between the three aspects of language as communication was irrevocably broken.”

Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o continues, “The alienation became reinforced in the teaching of history, geography, music, where bourgeois Europe was always the center of the universe.” He further notes, “The disassociation, divorce, or alienation from the immediate environment becomes clearer when you look at colonial language as a carrier of culture” (p. 17). The pejorative nature of the colonial language has personal implications. In the novel *Allah N’Est Pas Obligé* (God is not obligated), by Kourouma (2007) the story’s protagonist, a young boy named Birahima, reflects on how language affects his psyche:

“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. C’é comme ça. Même si on est grand, même vieux, même arabe, chinois, blanc, russe, même

américain ; si on parle mal le français, on dit on parle p'tit nègre, on est p'tit nègre quand même. Ça, c'est la loi du français de tous les jours qui veut ça.”⁶

Not speaking correct French is thus a mark of inferiority, reminiscent of ancient Greece's term for non-Greek speakers, “babblers” or barbarian (Pruitt 2018). Colonial languages, as Birahima suggests, are intertwined with race and racism. “Racism appears then,” Memmi (1965, p. 74) notes, “not as an incidental detail, but as a consubstantial part of colonialism. It is the highest expression of the colonial system and one of the most significant features of the colonialist.” This internalized racism devalues the colonized people and their culture: Frantz Fanon (2008, p.1) in *Black Skin, White Masks* states, “A black man behaves differently with a white man than he does with another black man. There is no doubt whatsoever that this fissiparousness is a direct consequence of the colonial undertaking.” Regarding Mali's recent decision to demote French from an official to working language, Chérif Keïta notes that, “It's only in Africa where if somebody does not speak a European language, that person is looked down upon” (Avi-Yonah 2023). Racism, as Memmi (1991) observes, is not incidental, but rather the highest expression of the colonial system.

Another key mechanism, closely related to language, in the persistence of colonization is the role of the arts, including literature, music, and film. As noted above in *Allah N'Est Pas Obligé* and as seen in novels such as Achebe's *Arrow of God* and *Things Fall Apart* or Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *The River Between*, all of which depict the destructive and exploitative nature of colonization. Films like *Camp de Thiaroye* (1988) by Ousmane Sembène depict the racist nature of the colonizer, a film that was banned for years while *The Battle of Algiers* depicts the brutal

⁶ English translation of Kourouma (2007) by Frank Wynne: “First off, Number one...My name is Birahima and I'm a little nigger. Not 'cos I'm black and I'm a kid. I'm a little nigger because I can't talk French for shit. That's how things are. You might be a grown-up, or old, you might be Arab, or Chinese, or white, or Russian—or even American—if you talk bad French, it's called *parler petit nègre*—little nigger talking—so that makes you a little nigger too. That's the rules of French for you.”

fight for decolonization. Perhaps even more powerful in shaping the persistence is the role of music. Tikan Jah Fakoly sings in *Plus rien ne m'étonne*:

Ils ont partagé le monde	They divided the world
Plus rien ne m'étonne	Nothing surprises me anymore
Ils ont partagé Africa sans nous consulter	They divided Africa without consulting us
Ils s'étonnent que nous soyons désunis	They are surprised that we are divided
Ils ont partagé Africa sans nous consulter!	They divided Africa without consulting us!
Sans nous demander ! Sans nous aviser!	Without asking us! Without telling us!

The roles of these various works given their notoriety is to carry the message of colonialism and its injustices forward thus shaping how people know it and how this in turn shapes their views of contemporary issues, such as their views of globalization.

Another critical legacy of colonialism in Africa is the persistence of (semi-) authoritarian governance. The colonial state per se was said to be “despotic” and “extractive”, one that was necessarily repressive. Jackson (2013) notes that “The colonial state might have been small, but its power over people was remarkable; the impact upon people’s lives of a deepening encounter with the global economy which it brokered was even more so” (p. 10). The colonial process thus left states institutionally weak, with little exposure to democratic norms or mechanisms of accountability (Jackson 2013). Moreover, being a colonial relic, the state was made into a space that was, as Ekeh (1975) notes, amoral thus not only permitting but demanding a ‘take what you can when you can’ mentality. French colonial rule, in particular, was marked by centralization and autocratic rule. Governors wielded significant power yet remained tightly controlled by Paris—appearing as autocrats with sovereign authority (Fieldhouse 1966, p. 311-312). As Jackson argues, colonies were never meant to be nation-states; their flags, anthems, and parliaments lacked meaning. Lee and Paine (2024) argue that the nature of colonial institutions shaped postcolonial trajectories, influencing whether political systems are democratic or authoritarian today, as does

Gailmard (2024) in the case of the United States. The postcolonial African state, shaped deeply by colonialism, is often unable, or unwilling, to deliver public goods, fostering dissatisfaction and reinforcing resentment toward the conditions that produced such weakness.

Global events associated with the former colonial powers also continue to shape perceptions of colonization. The NATO-led ouster of Gaddafi in 2011, for instance, destabilized the Sahel region, enabling Tuareg separatist movement to re-emerge, and for jihadist groups like JNIM/Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and Boko Haram to thrive and commit deadly attacks across the region. Former French colony Burkina Faso is now the world's most terrorized country, supplanting Afghanistan and Iraq for this dubious distinction (Institute for Economics and Peace 2024). Gaddafi, while despised in the West, was seen by many Africans as a stabilizing force and even promote of development in the region. His fall thus triggered a regional crisis. Niger's former democratically elected president, now under house arrest, called the NATO intervention and ouster of Gaddafi "the mother of all our problems" (Soudan 2021), and Guinea-Bissau's President Umaro Sissoco Embaló described it as "the mistake of the century," noting its role in spreading Islamic terror across the region. Then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton famously laughed and said on CBS News, "We came. We saw. He died," firmly acknowledging the West's role in this process in a notably callous and condescending attitude. Anti-French sentiment is partly rooted in such interventions, seen by many as neo-colonial in spirit, and also in political rhetoric pushed by French leaders. In a speech in 2007, then President Sarkozy said, "The tragedy of Africa is that the African has not fully entered into history...This man (the traditional African) never launched himself towards the future. The idea never came to him to get out of this repetition and invent his own destiny...Africa's challenge," he continues, "is to enter to a greater extent into history." He then notes in this speech, "Africa's problem is that it lives the present too much in nostalgia for a

lost childhood paradise.” Sarkozy later refused to apologize for France’s colonial rule, including in Algeria, insisting in a 2007 meeting with then-Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika, “I’m for a recognition of the facts but not for repentance, which is a religious notion that has no place in relations between states” (Reuters 2007). His stance, grounded in a politics of non-repentance, has fed into what Noussis (2020) calls Macron’s ‘crisis of acceptance’ (Noussis 2020). Macron has similarly made controversial, paternalistic remarks about African women’s fertility and education, implying cultural backwardness and undermining African agency (Wintour 2018). In reference to France’s military role in the Sahel, he quipped, “Je crois qu’on a oublié de nous dire merci,” or ‘I think they forget to thank us,’ a comment that reinforces the inequities, social, economic, and political, associated with the colonial past.

The colonial problem shows itself in many ways today, including in sports. The French World Cup team that won in 2018 many commentators argue highlights the continued extraction inherent to colonization. Speaking of the 2018 World Cup team, Kamel (2022) notes that, “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...Indeed, colonialism ... took and absorbed the best out of other lands, while rejecting everything else, and giving very little, if anything, in exchange.” The persistence of colonization thus remains an international concern. Not so long ago, the United Nations’ 1960 General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) stated colonialism was a violation of human rights and an impediment to peace, development, and global cooperation. Yet, as the dynamics discussed here show, the structures and ideologies of colonialism remain entrenched in global and regional politics, reinforcing inequality and fueling resistance.

In most African countries, colonialism officially ended in the 1950s and early '60s. However, the violence of colonialism (Veracini 2023) did not end then as an informal colonial era took root across the global south, including brutal wars in India, Nigeria, and Vietnam. Colonies offered the metropole profitable trades within broader patterns of inequality and exploitation that often deepened after independence thus making colonial legacies relatively hard to undo. In West Africa today, it should not be surprising then to see a growing backlash against France, the former colonial power that in the eyes of many people exploited their people and resources then and now. Protests against the French military presence, the CFA currency, and linguistic dominance are becoming more frequent often with serious consequences. Following a series of recent coups, Mali and Burkina Faso have demoted French to a working language. Nigerian political analyst, Nyossa Djimrao said, "The decisions of Burkina Faso and Mali represent the end of an era during which this language served France, entrenching its influence over its former colonies in the African Sahel" (Hidri 2024). Djimaro adds, "France imposed this language on its colonies which is why I believe that the decision to abandon it is both revolutionary and beneficial. Such steps will be replicated by other countries like Niger, which is in complete political and diplomatic harmony with Ouagadougou and Bamako." In a bid to promote English in school, Algerian president Abdelmadjid Tebboune said, "French is a spoil of war, but English is an international language" (Rouaba 2022). Mauritania's National Assembly passed a new law, Article 65, mandating that "Arabic is to be taught to all children whose mother tongue is not Arabic as a language of communication and as a language of instruction" (AfricaNews 2022). This decision has been political and continues to alienate black-speaking Peuhl, Soninke, and Hassanya.

Over time, resistance persisted through reform movements like Côte d'Ivoire's African Agricultural Union and the Ivorian Democratic Party under Félix Houphouët-Boigny, leading to

modest concessions via the French Union, though Côte d'Ivoire remained in the French Community in 1958, unlike Guinea, while modern discontent with *FrançAfrique* (Borrel et al. 2021) persisted. In Senegal, graffiti along highways in and around Dakar demands “Dégage France” (go home France), and in Niger and Mali the colonial legacy fuels protests and resistance, reflecting a colonial legacy tied to the enduring imposition of French policy, and its language and culture (Handloff 1991; Borrel et al. 2021; Mbulle-Nziege and Cheeseman 2023). Discontent with French control, or what has been termed *FrançAfrique* (Borrel et al. 2021) persisted. In Senegal, graffiti along highways in and around Dakar demands “Dégage France” (go home France). In Niger, a coup ousting President Bazoum was followed by heavy protests against the French, and recently a political leader in Mali claimed the coup there was driven by “neocolonialist, condescending, paternalist and vengeful policies” (Mbulle-Nziege and Cheeseman 2023).

Colonization and Views of Globalization

This deeply entrenched relationship between the former colonial powers and those living in colonized countries shapes views of contemporary politics, including views of globalization. The backlash to globalization is long-running in the developing world, as evidenced at Bandung in 1955 where the world's developing countries openly declared the “evil” of colonization and the structural problems of trade and globalization more generally. These positions reflected not new positions but rather deeply held beliefs in these places about the process and its control of globalization—immigration, investment, and trade—in structurally inequitable ways. As it exists globalization is ‘global’ for the world at large, but for most countries, especially small developing countries in Africa, it is less global, more focused around specific partners. In many ways, the colonial legacy set this up. Today, many countries have *dependent* relations as a part of globalization often with a former colonial power in what some people call neo-colonization.

Specifying the relations as we think about globalization will see an emergence of attitudes and opinions that are indicative of a backlash.

The current literature on views of globalization has noted a robust and abiding populist backlash against globalization (Autor et al. 2020; Ballard-Rosa, Goldstein, and Rudra 2024; Bisbee, Mosley, Pepinsky, and Rosendorff 2020; Burgoon 2009; Colantone, Ottaviano and Stanig 2025; Milner 2021), with some exceptions (Bergh and Kärnä 2021). Within Western countries, there is said to be a geography to the backlash with populist anti-immigration, anti-globalist sentiments concentrated in those places that have suffered due to globalization and technological change; anti-globalist identity centers around place and thus so does the backlash against globalization (Broz, Frieden, and Weymouth 2021). In a recent article in *Foreign Affairs* Bonifai, Nooruddin, and Rudra (2021) note that even in developing countries there is declining support for globalization and free trade—the proffered explanation is economic, namely that the lower skilled sectors of the population have not gained while those of higher skills have gained from globalization. Research also shows that economic shocks, i.e., increases in Chinese imports, increase the likelihood of authoritarian values due to enhanced frustration of being held back from achieving their goals (Ballard-Rosa et al. 2021; Colantone and Stanig 2018). This suggests a cultural side to the backlash. Building on this tradition, albeit in a more elongated time-frame, colonization as a social, political, and economic process, is too a shock, which induces a cultural reaction which in turn shapes views of globalization.

In sum, colonization acts as a *discount* on perceptions of globalization, serving to reduce its value when connected to the colonial power. More formally, if we think of support for globalization in a general sense as a deliberation between its benefits (*B*) and costs (*C*) each of which are influenced by a variety of factors. The benefits here are an aggregation of the access to

lower costs goods and services and better jobs brought by immigration, trade, and investment, while the costs come from lost employment, dislocations, and other associated negative effects of the same processes. In the case of colonization and its application in the developing world we know that globalization is largely supported at high levels such that the benefits are likely to be higher than the costs and thus support will be relatively high, of course with differences across immigration, investment, and trade. In this context, colonization will reduce the benefits of globalization depending on how much each individual reacts negatively to its past and present effects. We can write this more formally as follows:

$$g_{ijk} = \frac{\delta_{ijk} B_{ijk}}{C_{ijk}} + \varepsilon_{ij} \quad [1]$$

In equation [1], support for globalization (g) is increasing with benefits (B) and decreasing with costs (C) and modified by a discount factor (δ). The error (ε) captures random individual variability in support for globalization, which is assumed to be normally distributed around zero. The discount factor is specifically influenced by the colonial past such that those individuals who react with bitterness and anger over the colonial past are likely to set this closer to zero and those who discount the colonial past are more likely to set it closer to one.

In thinking about the current situation in West Africa, we can argue that on average the colonial past as captured by δ is variable across countries. In Mali and Senegal, the current political situation is much more contentious and much of it centers around anti-French and anti-Western sentiments. Driving around Dakar, Senegal, one can see in bright red block-graffiti “Dégage France” or “Get Out France” whereas in Abidjan (and also Accra), this graffiti is less prevalent if it is there at all. Thus, we expect δ to be lower on average in Mali and Senegal as compared to Côte d’Ivoire, and thus support for globalization to be less robust than in Côte

d'Ivoire. If we assume the benefits and costs of globalization are roughly the same in each country, then we can see that as $\delta \rightarrow 0$ support for globalization declines.

For those who wish to encourage globalization, and to do so by emphasizing its benefits we can see that the efficiency with which benefits translate into support for globalization depends on the discount factor. We can look at this and how this affects support for globalization, as elaborated in equation [1]. If we take the partial derivative of support for globalization with respect to the perceived benefits we get the following:

$$\frac{\partial g_{ijk}}{\partial B_{ijk}} = \frac{\delta_{ijk}}{C_{ijk}} \quad [2]$$

This tells us that increasing the benefits of globalization will only increase support for globalization where the discount factor is closer to 1. In cases where the discount factor is close to 0, those places where the colonial legacy is strong and controversial, we can see that large changes in the benefits will yield very small if any additional increases in support for globalization. Thus, in these places turning benefits into support is going to be very difficult as opposed to places where the discount factor is closer to 1 or where the colonial legacy is less controversial. For a country like France, or for Western institutions more generally, pushing support for globalization is going to depend on the colonial discount factor. In places where this is high there will be little benefit to emphasizing the benefits of globalization, but instead working to push the discount factor to 1 is likely to be a better strategy for encouraging support for globalization.

Research Design

Based on the previous section's discussion, I test the following hypotheses about attitudes to globalization in former French colonies in West Africa:

- *Respondents will be less favorable to immigration from France compared to other*

- countries.*
- *Respondents will be less favorable to investment from France compared to other countries.*
- *Respondents will be less favorable to investment toward France compared to other countries.*

As discussed, these expectations are likely to be most pronounced in Mali and Senegal where anti-colonial sentiments are especially pronounced today. In the context of this paper, the legacy of colonization is expected to generate a framing effect (Amsalem & Zoizner 2022; Drukman 2001; Kam & Simas 2010; Tversky & Kahneman 1981), shaping perceptions of Western countries and the processes they support. To examine the potential framing effect of colonization, I conducted survey experiments in West Africa. The surveys sampled in four countries, selected based on their likelihood of exhibiting a framing effect around colonization toward globalization. Mali, due to recent political events, represents the most likely case, followed closely by Senegal. Côte d'Ivoire serves as an intermediate case, while Ghana, a former British colony, is the least likely case. Figure 1 displays a map of the survey sites.

The survey asked respondents a set of questions about globalization, focusing on immigration and investment, which lie at the heart of colonization and how it shaped the lives of the colonized both past and present. Perhaps no issue today is more controversial than immigration, and images of African migrants on small boats trying to reach the shores of Europe dominate contemporary news feeds. The issue of immigration is politically divisive across Western countries. Related to immigration, investment is also a key concern for people in former colonies and recently foreign business have been targeted in former colonies, like French grocery stores Auchan which have been looted and burned in Dakar, Senegal. Focusing on these aspects of globalization, the survey, here presented for Côte d'Ivoire, looks at responses to three questions: to capture views of immigration, respondents were asked “Do you support immigration from

[COUNTRY] to Côte d'Ivoire?" For inward foreign investment they were asked, "Are you in favor of [COUNTRY] companies investing in Côte d'Ivoire?" and for outward investment "Are you in favor of Ivorian companies investing in [COUNTRY]?" Responses were a simple Likert scale of strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. To eliminate satisficing we do not include a 'neither' category. The country was randomized in each case with possible selections being France, the colonizing country, two African countries including Nigeria, Mali, and two non-African countries, China and the United States.

Data were collected by survey teams in each country with enumerators from each locale. Enumerators were both male and female, and were fluent in French as well as local languages. Each team had conducted many surveys on prior projects and were all well versed in the data collection process. Enumerators were trained and prepped about this specific survey although no specifics were given about theoretical expectations. The data collected are from samples in various parts of Abidjan, Accra, Bamako, and Dakar. In each city, we selected major clusters in primary neighborhoods where the enumerators started in a central point and pursued random walks in different directions asking people to participate in a survey. In general, enumerators walked between 15 to 30 seconds between each respondent and asked both men and women to participate in the survey. Surveys were done using pencil and paper as we have found in past projects that electronic pads cause numerous problems in the data collection process, including lower response rates both for the survey and items on it. In general, across these sites response rates were relatively high, at or better than 75 percent. The survey first presented respondents with a general background of purpose, including that the survey had IRB approval (#2324-131) as well a contact information from the author's home university.

Empirical Results

As part of the estimation strategy, I first present difference in means tests building in more complex regression analyses as we proceed, acknowledging potential issues with post-treatment bias, and thus favoring the idea that if the treatment is (plausibly) exogenous then limited regression designs or a simple difference in means can give us a credible causal estimate (Agnolin, Colantone, and Stanig 2025). Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for each sample. As part of our sampling, we also included a directed sampling in Senegal of the Fulbe, an ethnic group that originates from Senegal but stretches across the Sahel. Known traditionally as pastoralists and cattle people, the Fulbe, or more commonly known in Western countries as the Fulani or Peul, are known as trading people and have also recently come into conflict across the region with sedentary farmers. As traditional pastoralists we included them as a separate group to see if their views of globalization and the framing effect differed compared to the other samples included in this analysis.

The first three rows show the means for the outcomes—immigration and investment (in/out)—and indicate on the four-point scale that most samples are averaging at a high 2 with a low of 2.55 for Mali and a high of 2.93 for Senegal. Inward investment has the highest of all scores, with all scores over three except for the Fulani, while outward investment scores are uniformly lower by sample. Respondents thus are more supportive of inward versus outward investment. Turning to the sample characteristics, we can see that mean income (1000s CFA) goes from a low of 93 in Mali to a high of 125 in Senegal or about \$125-200 per month. Across the samples, we can see that mean age is similar, from a range of 34 (Côte d’Ivoire) to 41 (Mali). The percent male to female is roughly 50-50 with a slight oversampling of males in each case. Education levels vary with most at the elementary to high school level, although many respondents in each sample reporting at least some university education. Religious practices break down as we

expect with Mali and Senegal being majority Muslim, Côte d'Ivoire being evenly split with a slight edge to Muslims (47% Muslim to 43% Christian), and the Ghanaian sample having the highest percentage of Christians at about the national average of 70 percent.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics, by Country					
	<i>Mali</i>	<i>Senegal</i>	<i>Côte d'Ivoire</i>	<i>Ghana</i>	<i>Fulani</i>
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.					

Balance tests were conducted using simple regression analyses for the following covariates: education, income, sex, age, and religion. Across all samples, education, age, and religion show no evidence of imbalance as all results are statistically insignificant. For income and sex, there is minor evidence of imbalance in the samples from Ghana and Mali. However, including these variables as controls in subsequent analyses does not alter the results. Over-all, the treatment groups are balanced across observable respondent characteristics.

Colonization and Immigration

Immigration is arguably the most divisive topic surrounding globalization today. This issue tends to get framed as a north-south issue, but there are intense south-south dynamics at play too, as seen in Côte d'Ivoire in the early 2000s around the idea of *ivorité* and in-group out-group dynamics (Straus 2011). The results in Figure 2 show there is variation across countries with some relatively more supportive—Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire—and others less supportive—Mali—with differences that are statistically significant. A difference in means test between Mali and Senegal shows a difference of 0.38 ($p < 0.001$) with a Cohen's d of 0.35 indicating a small to medium effect size. Given that views of immigration are often seen as homogenous in the developing world, this effect size seems to be sizable in that context.

Turning to the effect of colonization, I next consider the results when the question is framed by source country. I first look at France relative to all the other countries in the sample. We can see in Figure 3 that the results for Mali and Senegal conform to the expectations of a backlash against globalization when connected to the colonial power: for respondents in Mali, there is a clear difference opposed to the French by 0.95 points ($p < 0.001$) with a Cohen's d of 0.98 indicating a very large effect. For Senegal, the difference is 0.60 points ($p < 0.001$) and the Cohen's d is 0.55. However, turning to Côte d'Ivoire we see a different scenario and respondents are more supportive of immigration when they believe it is coming from France. In this case, the difference in means increases by 0.28 points ($p = 0.001$) with a moderate effect size of 0.30. For Ghana, there is an increase of about 0.28 points (framed as the U.K.), although it is not significant ($p = 0.07$).

Adding controls to extend these tests shows that the backlash found in Mali and Senegal holds. Figure 4 indicates that the differences in a regression analysis are statistically significant

with the predicted value of immigration support higher for the control group compared to the French frame, while for Côte d’Ivoire we see a statistically significant difference with the French frame slightly greater than the control group. For Ghana and the Fulani samples, the difference is not statistically significant.

Moving beyond the French versus grouped control, I next unpack the control group and look at the treatment effects, focusing on the France frame compared to the other four country frames. On the vertical axis, Figure 5 shows each treatment group with France being the reference category. The samples presented are just those from the French colonies—Côte d’Ivoire, Senegal, and Mali—each coded with a colored circle. Figure 5 shows that in most cases the French frame is less preferred than the others. The China frame is preferred to the French in both of the most-likely cases of Mali and Senegal, though not in Côte d’Ivoire where the French version is preferred to the Chinese version. The same is true when the frame is Nigeria, in which both the samples from Mali and Senegal prefer the Nigerian frame, while the opposite is true for Côte d’Ivoire. When Mali is the frame, there is a relatively large preference in Mali and Senegal, while in Côte d’Ivoire there is an even stronger preference for France.⁷ Finally, when the U.S. is the frame we see that this is the only case in which all samples exhibit a preference over France.

Beyond the treatment effects, Figure 6 shows the predicted values based on the regression model with control variables. For the Mali sample, the predicted value of the immigration score is 1.8 for the French frame, rising to 2.8 for the China frame, 2.2 for Nigeria, 2.9 for Senegal (see *fn 2*), and 3.2 for the U.S. frame. For the Senegal sample, the predicted value of the immigration score is relatively higher at 2.4 for the French frame, rising to 2.9 for the China frame, 2.9 for Nigeria, 3.1 for Mali, and 3.5 for the U.S. frame. Finally, for the Ivorian sample, the predicted

⁷ Note that when we sampled in Mali we changed the Mali frame to Senegal.

value of the immigration score is relatively highest for the French frame at 3.1, falling to 2.9 for the China frame, 2.8 for Nigeria, 2.3 for Mali, and then rising to 3.4 for the U.S. frame.

Colonization and Investment

Turning from immigration, we can now consider the results for investment, first looking at inward investment. Figure 7 shows the predicted levels of support by country. In this case, all four samples have more or less the same mean level of support for inward investment, at over three points. The sub-sample of the Fulani are much lower at about 2.3 points. Like the results for immigration, in Figure 8 we see again a distinct preference for the control group over the France frame in both Mali and Senegal. In the former, support for inward investment falls from 3.29 on average in the control group to over one point less at 2.18 for the French frame, for a difference of 1.11 points ($p < 0.001$). In Senegal, the average support in the control group is 3.27 which falls to 2.53 in the French frame, a difference of 0.74 points ($p < 0.001$). These results are indicative of a backlash against globalization when framed around the colonial power France, but this is again not the case in Côte d'Ivoire where the French frame encourages more positive sentiments of globalization as the mean score for the control group increases from 3.09 to 3.30 for a difference of 0.21 points ($p = 0.01$). The same is true in Ghana—here using the United Kingdom frame—as the score increases from 3.09 to 3.33 for a difference of .24 points ($p = 0.07$). Finally, the Fulani mirror the results in Mali and Senegal with a distinct fall in the French group of 0.63 points ($p < 0.01$).

The treatment effects with controls for gender, number of children, age, education level, and religion, are displayed in Figure 9. Here we can see that the point estimate for the control group is significantly higher than the French treatment group, while the colonial treatment group is higher in both Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, although the differences are not statistically significant

as the intervals overlap. For the Fulani, the control group is favored compared to the French frame, and the difference is statistically significant.

Further exploring these treatment effects, we can unpack the control group into its constituent parts, as shown in Figure 10. Here, the vertical axis shows each treatment group individually with the reference category being France. For China compared to France, we can see that in Côte d'Ivoire, marked by the yellow circle, that China is slightly favored over France by .018 points but the result is not statistically significant ($p = 0.85$) whereas in Mali and Senegal the China frame is favored over the French frame by about 1.20 and 0.75 points respectively. Comparing the Nigeria frame, we see in Côte d'Ivoire that Nigeria is not preferred to France, by about 0.25 points, while in Mali and Senegal it is preferred to France by roughly 0.78 and 0.65 points respectively. When Mali is the frame, we see that again in the sample from Côte d'Ivoire that Mali is much less preferred by 0.81 points less compared to France. In the sample from Mali, again the frame in this case is Senegal, we see that the frame of Senegal is preferred by about 1.21 points while in the sample from Senegal the frame for Mali is preferred by 0.75 points. Finally for the U.S. frame, we see that this is the only case where all three samples show a preference over the French frame by about 0.20 points in Côte d'Ivoire, 0.94 in Senegal, and 1.25 in Mali, all of which are significant below the .05 threshold.

Finally, Figure 11 shows the predicted values. In the case of inward investment, we can see a distinct pattern for both Mali and Senegal in which the predicted value for France is lowest—2.2 in Mali and 2.5 in Senegal—with all other predicted values at or greater than 3 points. However, in Côte d'Ivoire we see that other than the U.S., the predicted value for France is highest at 3.3 points with China having the same score and Nigeria lower at 3 points and Mali with lowest predicted value at 2.5 points and the U.S. at the highest value of 3.5 points.

Turning to outward investment, we can see in Figure 12 that views are most supportive in Senegal, followed by Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Mali. The Fulani are least supportive of outward investment. Views of outward investment are conditioned by the frame: in Mali, the results in Figure 13 show that the French frame is associated with significantly reduced support from 3.04 points in the control group to 2.11, a difference of 0.92 points ($p < 0.001$). The same trend is true in Senegal, where the French frame causes support to fall from 3.20 to 2.57 points, a difference of 0.64 points ($p < 0.001$). In Côte d'Ivoire, however, we again see this trend reverse and the French frame is now associated with an increase of support from 2.91 in the control group to 3.10 points, a difference of 0.19 points ($p = 0.04$). In the sample from Ghana, we see a decline in support associated with the U.K. frame, although the difference is not significant ($p = 0.34$). The Fulani have low levels of support for outward investment but the frame does not change those views.

The treatment effects by country are shown in Figure 14. For the China frame, we can see that the estimate for the Ivorian sample is negative suggesting they prefer France, although it is not statistically significant. However, the estimates for both the samples in Mali and Senegal are positive and significant thus suggesting they prefer outward investment to China than France. In the case of Nigeria, we see that the Ivorian sample prefers France by about 0.28 points, and the estimate in this case is significant. In the samples from Mali and Senegal, Nigeria is preferred to France by about 0.60 points. When the frame is Mali compared to France, we again see the Ivorian sample prefers France by about 0.59 points. The sample in Mali—here comparing Senegal to France—prefers the Senegal frame to the French frame, supporting outward investment to the former by about 0.91 points. For the Senegalese sample, we see that respondents prefer outward investment by 0.76 points when framed as Mali compared to France. Finally, outward investment is preferred to the U.S. than France in all samples, with the estimate in the Ivorian sample not quite

statistically significant ($p = 0.13$) but significant in both Mali and Senegal ($p < 0.001$).

Figure 15 shows the predicted values. In the case of outward investment, we can see a distinct pattern for both Mali and Senegal in which the predicted value for France is lowest—2.1 in Mali and 2.6 in Senegal—with all other predicted values greater than that score. However, in Côte d’Ivoire we see that other than the U.S., the predicted value for France is second highest at 3.1 points with China having a slightly lower score and Nigeria lower at 2.9 points and Mali with lowest predicted value at 2.6 points and the U.S. at the highest value of 3.3 points.

Extensions

To extend the analysis, I introduced a pure control group, rather than using another country as the control, and added several questions on globalization. The pure control aligns with prior research, which typically frames globalization in general terms rather than with reference to a specific partner. The additional questions include those on immigration—“Do you think illegal immigrants [control/from France] in Senegal should be sent back to their country of origin?”—on trade—“Do you think the Senegalese government should try to encourage international trade [control/with France]?”—and on politics, including diplomacy—“It is essential that Senegal work [with other countries/work with France] to solve problems such as hunger, overpopulation and pollution”—and the 2011 intervention in Libya—“Did you agree with [control/France’s decision] to oust Muammar Gaddafi from power in 2011?”

The results for Côte d’Ivoire are presented in Figure 16. For purposes of comparison with other studies on trade, I combined the categories into a 0 (disagree) or 1 (agree). For immigration, we see that respondents in Côte d’Ivoire are slightly more supportive of immigration when they are from France than versus the control group by about six points. This mirrors the results in Figure 3. The same is true for clandestine migrants in which we see a slight decrease in support

for sending them back to their home country when it is framed specifically as France. Turning to investment, we see that for inward investment support is relatively high—84% in the control group—but that falls by eight points when it is framed as France. Compared to the earlier results when there was no pure control—see Figure 8—this is a different finding as now we see less support for an aspect of globalization when compared to a pure control. The same is true for outward investment which falls by nine points when framed as with France compared to the control. For trade, not asked in the original analysis, we see high levels of support—86% support it in the control group—but that falls by 11 points to 75% when framed as trade with France. Looking at other questions, we see that respondents in Côte d’Ivoire largely think their country should work with other countries to solve global problems with a slight drop when it is framed as working with France to solve these problems (77% vs. 74%). Finally, for the question on Gaddafi, coded as 1 if they disagreed with the decision to oust him from power, we can see that there is an important framing effect as approximately 24% in the control group disagree with this decision to oust him, but when framed as led by France that disapproval rises to 45%, an increase of 21 points ($p < 0.001$).

The replication was also conducted in Senegal. These results are presented in Figure 17. For immigration, we see that respondents, as in Côte d’Ivoire, are slightly more supportive of immigration when they are from France than versus the control group by about seven points. For Senegal, this does not mirror the results in Figure 3 which showed less support for immigration when framed as France versus other countries. The same is true for clandestine migrants in which we see a slight decrease in support for sending them back to their home country when framed as France. For inward investment support is relatively high, although not as high as in Côte d’Ivoire—69% in the control group—but that falls by 16 points when the question is framed as

France. The relatively larger effect size is consistent with Senegal being a most-likely case. Compared to the earlier results when there was no pure control—see Figure 8—this is a similar finding as we again see less support for this aspect of globalization when compared to a pure control. The same is true for outward investment which falls by 16 points when framed as with France compared to the control. For trade, not in the original analysis, we see high levels of support—84% support it in the control group—but that falls by 22 points to 62% when framed as trade with France. Respondents in Senegal react much more strongly to the question on diplomacy than in Côte d’Ivoire: in the control group, 82% say Senegal should work with other countries but this falls by over 30 points to 51% when framed as working with France. For the question on Gaddafi, we see much higher levels of disagreement as 78% in the control group disagree with this decision while 86% disagree when framed as France ($p = 0.07$).

As part of the extension, respondents were asked what word or words come to mind when they think of France. Specifically, they were asked: “When you think of France, what is the first word that comes to mind?” Figure 18 shows the corresponding word cloud for each country. The word/phrases were coded as positive (blue) or negative (red) and by frequency as represented by the size. For the positive-negative coding, it was more clear in Côte d’Ivoire if a word was positive or negative with few cases that were unclear; however, in Senegal there more ambiguous cases like “immigration” or “Tirailleurs Sénégalais” which could be positive or negative depending on the context. These were coded as positive thus potentially underestimating the degree to which people hold negative thoughts of France in Senegal. Nevertheless, in comparing the two clouds, we can see that there is a lot more blue or positive responses in Côte d’Ivoire than in Senegal. Conversely, there is more red or negative in Senegal. For purposes of comparison, we note that in Côte d’Ivoire 77% of the words are coded as positive while in Senegal it is 45% for a difference

of 31 points ($p < 0.001$). In addition to variation by country, we also find a difference by treatment condition, as shown in Figure 19. The treatment condition of having the survey framed with France decreases the chances of saying a positive word or phrase by around 10 points. In Figure 19, we also see that Côte d'Ivoire is associated with an increase of about 22 points for saying something positive compared to Senegal.

The next extension elaborated on the first one, adding a third version with a prime added at the beginning of the survey. The prime was geared toward priming respondents with the idea of protest against colonial authorities and was added to the version framed as France. It added the following question at the beginning of the survey: "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?" The results for Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal are presented in Figures 20 and 21 respectively. For Côte d'Ivoire, we see that the protest prime makes respondents more supportive of immigration and less likely to expel those without papers. For the questions on investment, we see that the prime has a modest effect and for trade it has much the same effect as the French frame alone. Thus, there is not much of an effect from the prime on these questions. There is, however, more of an effect on the question of diplomacy as the prime version is 13 points lower than the French version alone. For the question about Gaddafi, we see that it makes respondents less likely to disagree with the decision to take out Gaddafi. Over-all, then, for the respondents in Côte d'Ivoire we see the prime did not significantly change views. In Senegal, we see similar results for immigration as both the French frame and the French frame plus prime push respondents to be more supportive of immigration. For the questions on investment and trade, however, we see that the prime pushes respondents back to being more supportive of globalization rather than less. This

could reflect the idea that the prime causes respondents to see that they have agency in addressing unequal relations with former colonial powers thus making them more supportive of globalization once they have been reminded of that point. There is a small bounce back effect from the prime for the question on diplomacy, and no effect on views of ousting Gaddafi which remain very much against that decision across all versions.

The prime ultimately had little effect on responses. What is interesting about the prime is how little effect it had on views of colonization. To understand this more clearly, I included a question at the end of the survey about colonization: “To what extent do you think French colonization still influences life in Côte d’Ivoire/Senegal today?” (with responses: Not at all, A little, Quite a bit, Completely). Figure 22 shows the results for both countries for an outcome of agree (=1 if respondent selected Quite a bit or Completely). In Côte d’Ivoire, we can see that fully 64% of respondents in the control group agreed that French colonization influences life there. This leaves little room for the prime to move these views. The prime does have a modest effect of about 14 points and it is significant. However, in Senegal we see that in the control group 79% believe that French colonization still influences life there. This leaves little room for the prime to change views and thus the prime has no effect on views of colonization there. What the results do show is that respondents in these places at relatively high levels believe that colonization still influences life there.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper argues that the backlash to globalization is not limited to the world’s developed democracies. It is also emerging in non-Western developing countries, especially in former colonies where historical experiences with empire continue to shape contemporary political and economic attitudes. Drawing on a detailed historical analysis of West Africa, this paper highlights

how colonization—while sometimes associated with modernization and economic development—also brought violence, subjugation, and lasting institutional legacies. These effects endured after formal independence through networks of formal and informal influence, notably *Françafrique* in West Africa. Within this context globalization cannot be understood in purely economic terms, but must also be seen through the lens of colonization.

To test this claim, I conducted survey experiments in four West African countries—Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Senegal, and Ghana—designed to examine how framing globalization in relation to the former colonial power affects support for immigration, investment, and trade. The results show a clear pattern: in Mali and Senegal, where anti-colonial attitudes are most pronounced, respondents expressed strong baseline support for globalization—over 75%—but this support fell sharply when globalization was linked to France, the former colonial power. In Senegal, for instance, support for foreign investment dropped from 83% to 51% when the source was France. Similarly, support for trade in Senegal dropped from 84% to 62% when framed as trade with France. In contrast, in Côte d’Ivoire there is less evidence of a framing effect, and in Ghana there is no evidence of this effect, suggesting that the backlash is not universal but conditional.

These findings carry important implications for theory and policy. First, they suggest a need to revisit how we think about the viability of the liberal international order, one of the most important questions in the social sciences (Broz, Frieden, and Weymouth 2021). Scholars have warned that liberal order is under threat both internally and externally (Mearsheimer 2019), and this paper adds to this concern. Specifically, it shows that the very actors who have long championed the liberal order may be undermining it through their past and present colonial activities. For rival powers like China and Russia, leveraging colonial histories is a powerful tool that has been used to challenge Western influence. For Western powers, acknowledging these

histories—and decoupling economic engagement from its neo-colonial aspects, will be important in supporting and sustaining the liberal order.

The findings illuminate and diverge with the work of Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson (2001) and others who have studied the long-run developmental effects of colonization. While AJR emphasize the institutional effects of colonialism, this paper complements their framework as it shows how colonial legacies persist to shape contemporary attitudes toward globalization. Although this is an indirect test of colonization—framing colonization through the identity of the former colonial power—the results, combined with the theory and AJR’s findings, suggest that there is a ‘memory’ to colonization that influences current public opinion. Yet, there are key differences with AJR. First, whereas their work focuses on the institutional effect of colonization, this paper emphasizes relational legacies and their effects on attitudes. Second, for AJR the type of colonizer is less central to the story, whereas in this paper *who* colonized is decisive. In AJR’s framework, Algeria—as a settler colony—might be defined as a case where colonization generated positive outcomes. In this paper’s framework, however, settler colonialism deepens negative relational legacies, making Algeria a context in which citizens are less likely to support globalization. On this point of settler colonialism, the two frameworks diverge in their interpretation of the development effects of this process.

These findings also contribute to our understanding of the ongoing debate about whether material self-interest or cultural factors drive public attitudes toward globalization. While much existing research has emphasized economic explanations, this study shows that colonial legacies remain salient, as found in earlier research (Margalit 2012, 2019). In the African context, the relatively high baseline support for globalization, as shown here, undercuts the idea that economic self-interest alone explains the backlash. Moreover, preferences for globalization with

neighboring African countries as opposed to France is also problematic here because the connections with these countries, like say with immigration, is likely to be problematic for most people in these places as migrants from neighboring countries are most likely to push downward on wages. Instead, support appears contingent on *who* one is globalizing with rather than globalization itself (Colantone, Ottaviano, and Stanig 2025). Framing effects around France are especially potent, likely because French colonial policy was built around ideas of assimilation and cultural dominance. This suggests that cultural factors play a role in shaping views of globalization.

Like all research, this study has limitations. The study focuses on a set of similar cases in West Africa, with Ghana as the exception. While this design captures variation across colonial experiences, future research could test if similar dynamics hold elsewhere. Within Africa, comparing Algeria and Tunisia (France) or Kenya and Uganda (Britain) could reveal whether direct colonial rule produces a stronger backlash than being a protectorate. Outside Africa, countries like India—where colonial experiences varied sub-nationally with both direct and indirect rule applications—could help isolate the mechanisms at play and the degree to which colonization shapes modern political opinion. In Latin America, where the colonial legacy is more distant, the effect is likely to be weaker, and in settler colonies, like Australia, Canada, or the U.S., colonial legacies are unlikely to be politically meaningful today as in say Mali or Senegal.

The generalizability of these results thus likely depends on how actively the colonial past continues to shape domestic politics. In countries like Algeria, the persistence of colonial institutions and grievances suggests strong potential for similar results. In contrast, in places where the colonial memory has faded—e.g., the U.S.—or where former colonizers are no longer dominant actors, framing effects may be weak or absent. Notably, even within the same colonial

power in the same region, effects can diverge—Côte d’Ivoire, for example, appears to exhibit less backlash than Mali or Senegal, possibly due to its close post-colonial alignment with France and also its earlier conflict with France.

Finally the findings offer important lessons for policymakers. Support for globalization in Africa remains high, but framing around colonization matters. Economic programs that avoid political meddling or the trappings of neo-colonialism are more likely to generate support. Political interventions like the NATO operation in Libya or the Iraq War, especially when led by former colonial powers, are likely to erode support for the liberal order not only among elites but among the public at large. Thus, Western countries seeking to preserve the liberal order should recognize and address if possible the colonial context in which their actions are viewed. The future of the liberal order may depend not only on the material benefits it delivers, but also on its moral legitimacy, much of which is shaped by its past.

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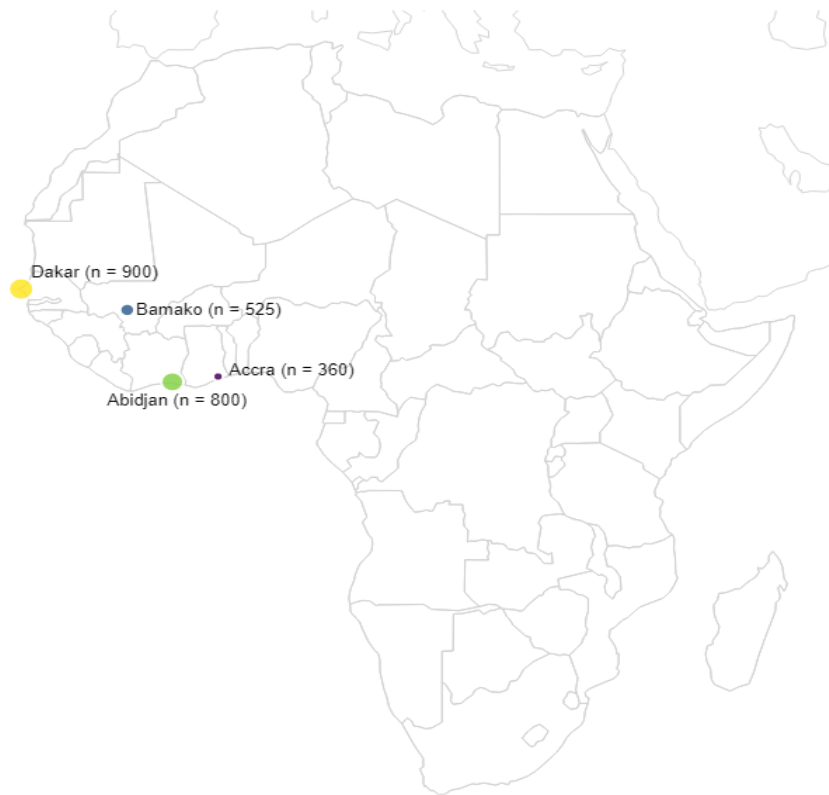
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Figure 1. Data Collection Locations in West Africa



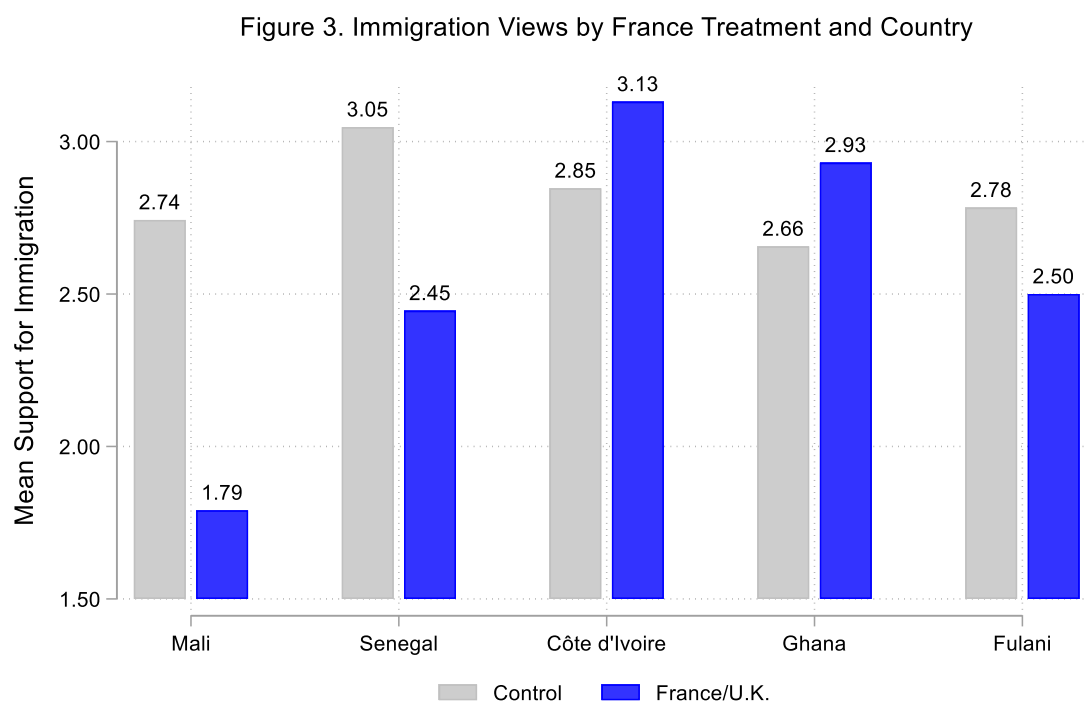
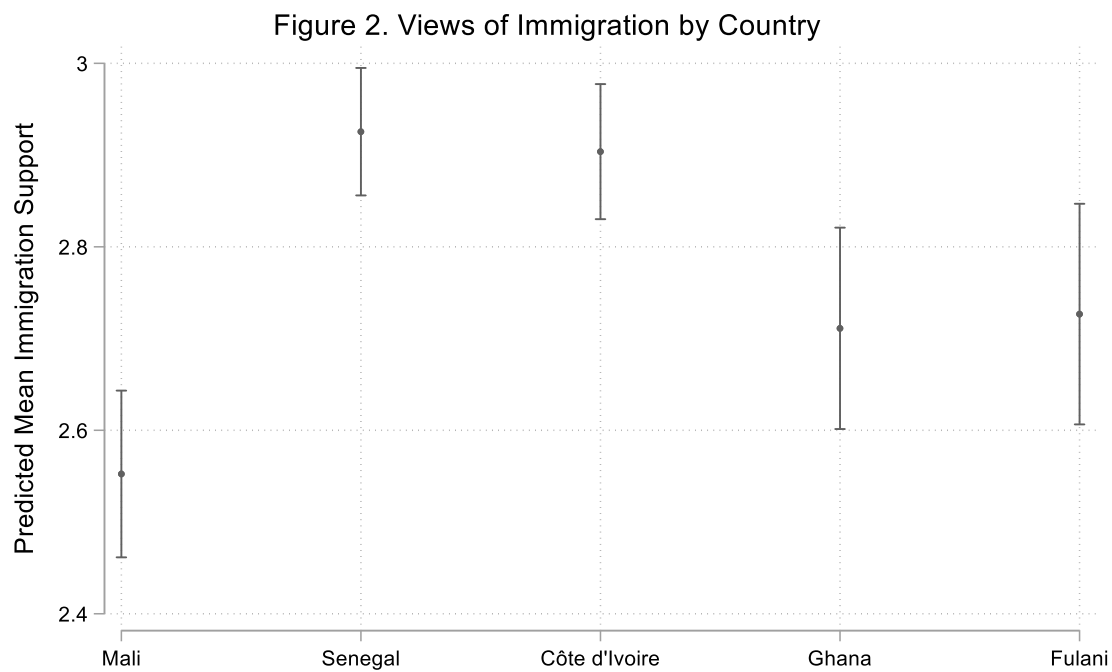


Figure 4. Adjusted Immigration Views by France Treatment and Country

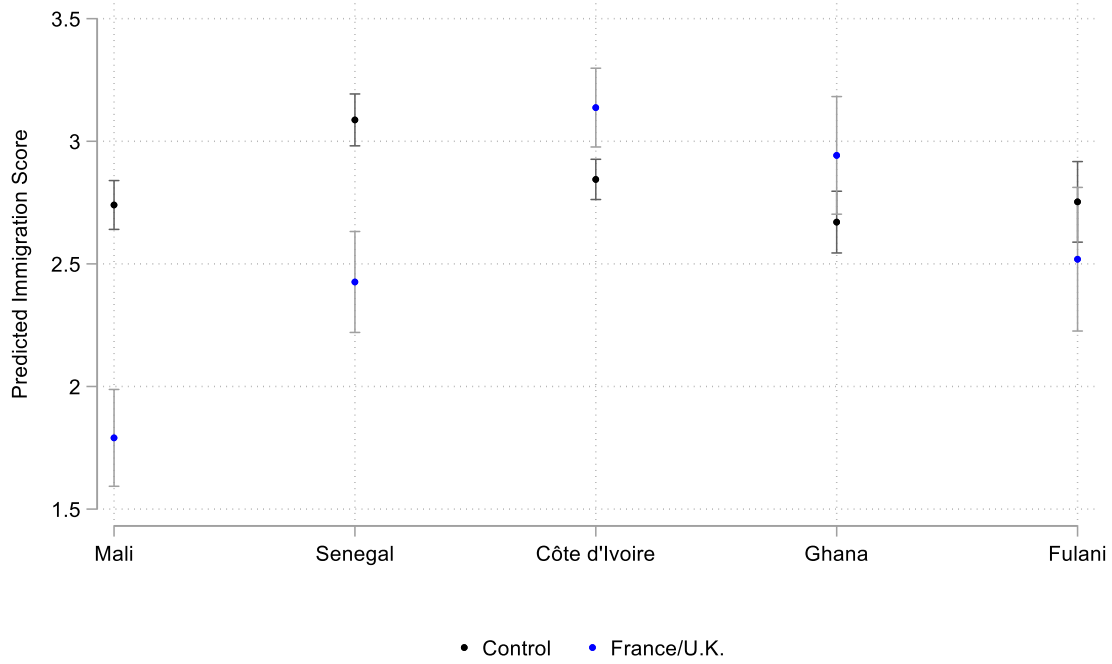
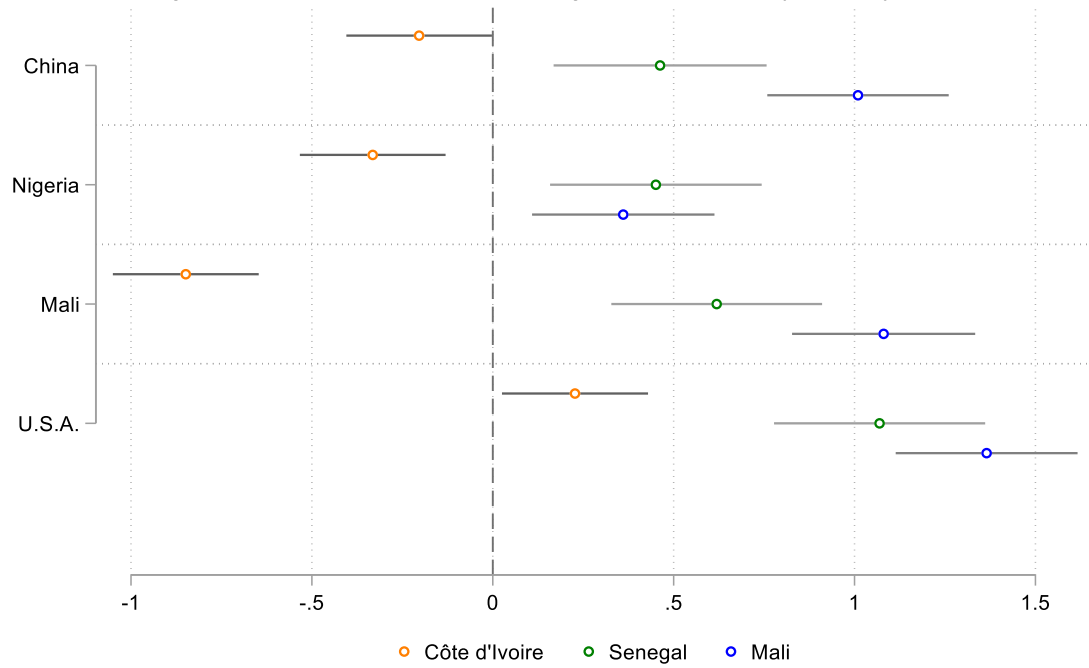


Figure 5. Treatment Effects on Immigration Attitudes by Country and Version



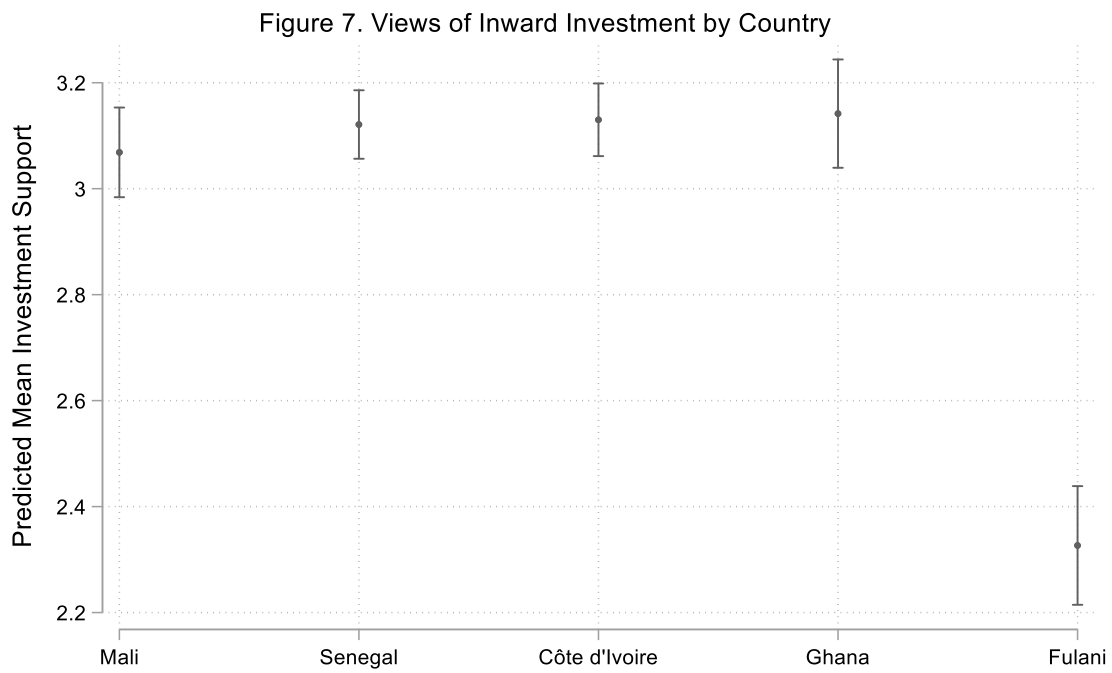
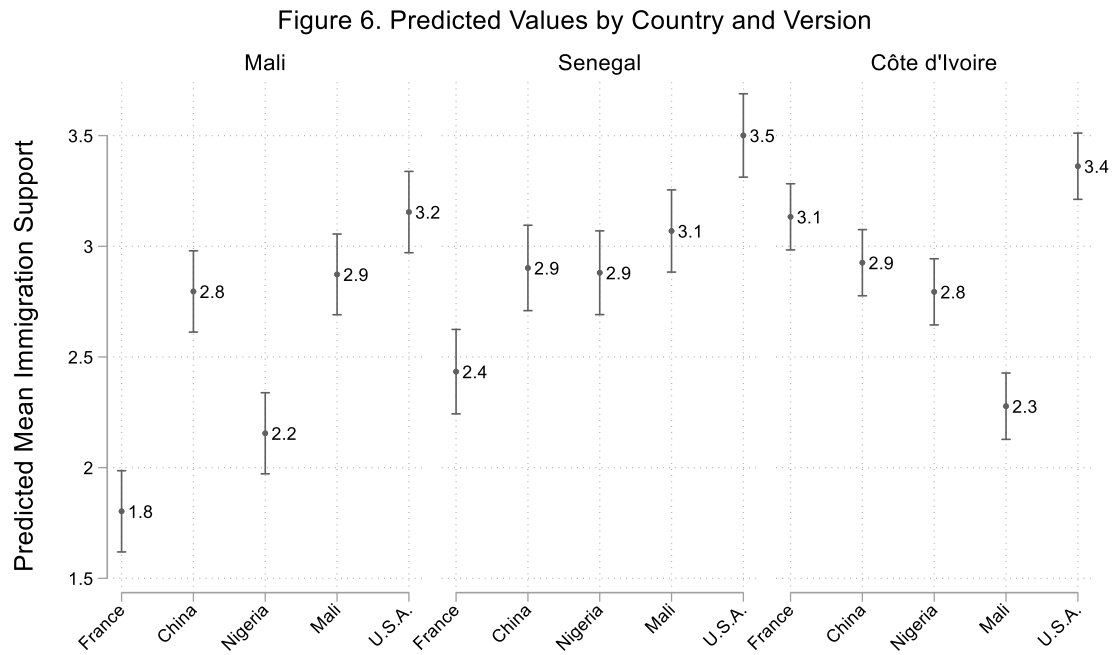


Figure 8. Investment Views by France Treatment and Country

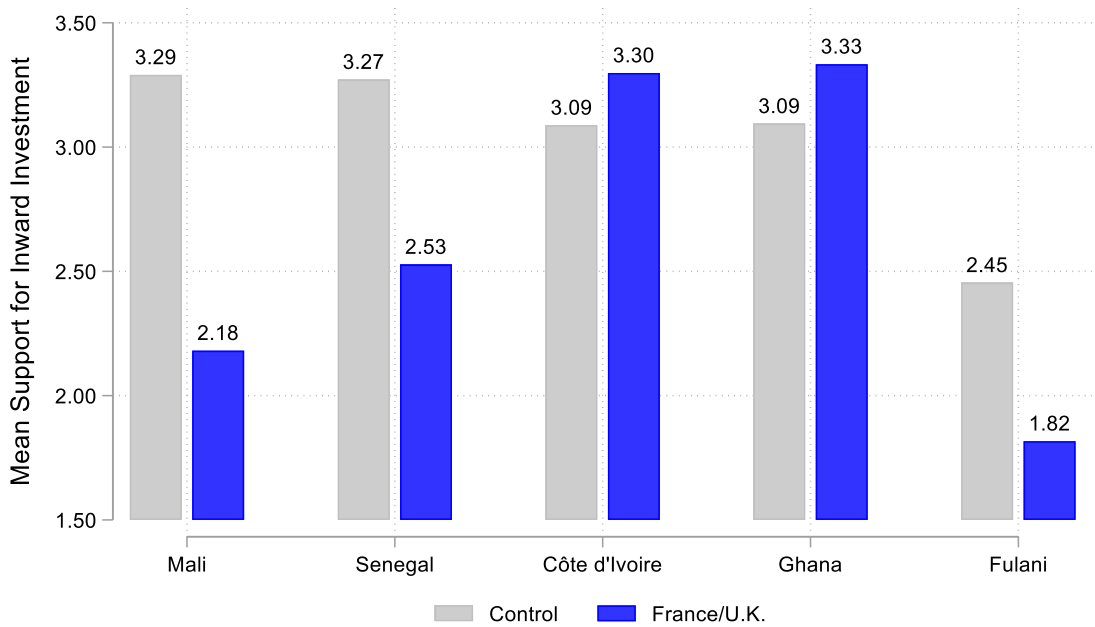


Figure 9. Adjusted Investment Views by France Treatment and Country

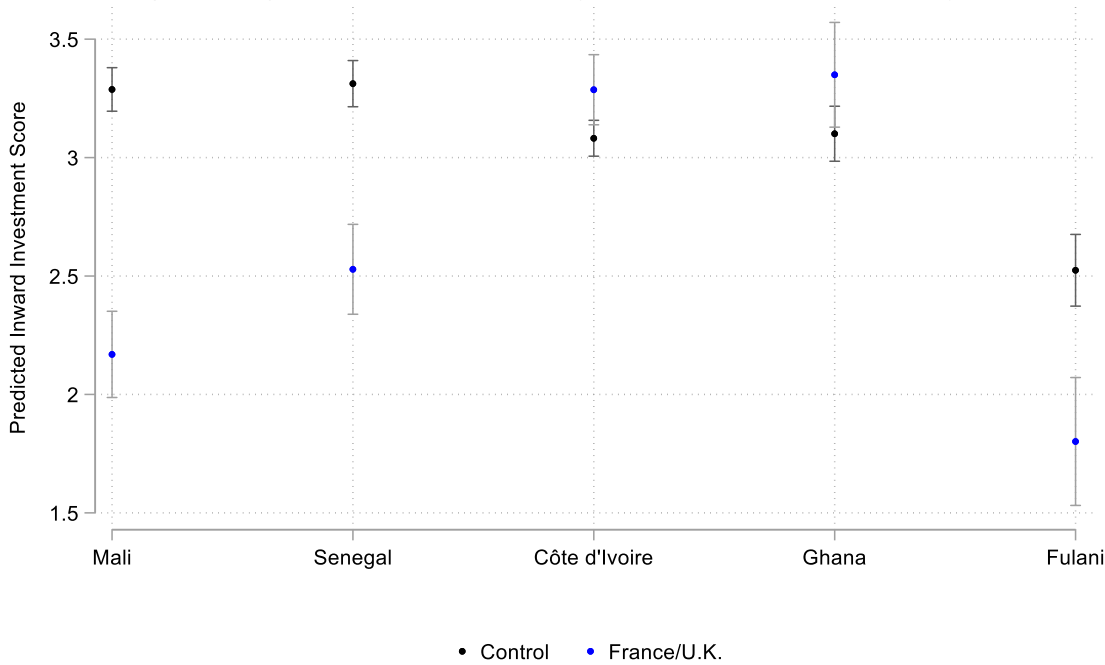


Figure 10. Treatment Effects on Investment Attitudes (inward) by Country and Version

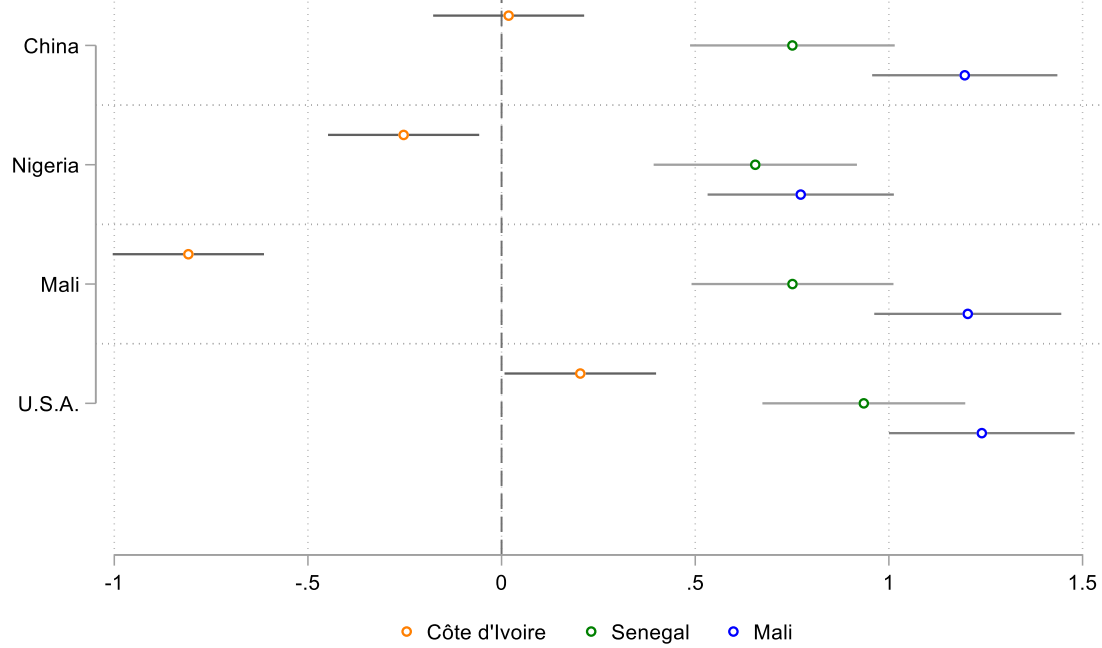


Figure 11. Predicted Values by Country and Version

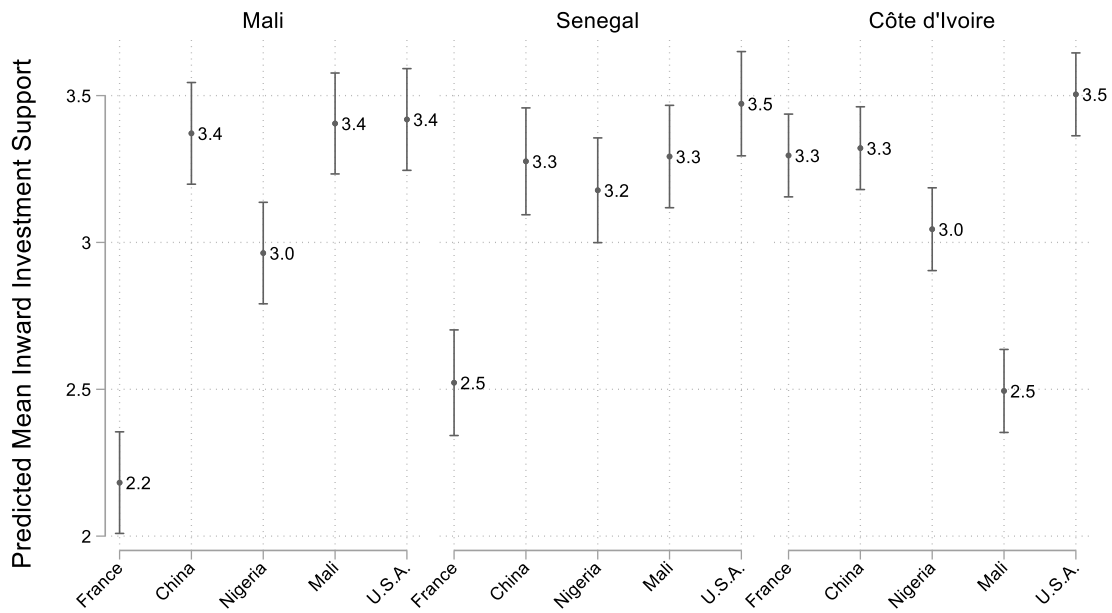


Figure 12. Views of Outward Investment by Country

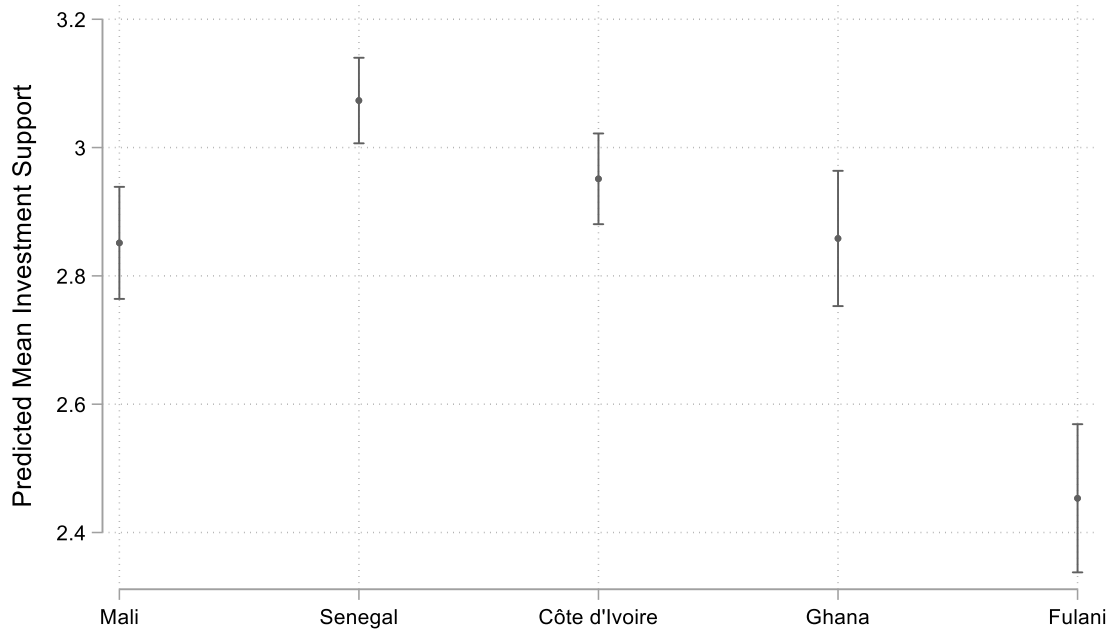


Figure 13. Investment Views by France Treatment and Country

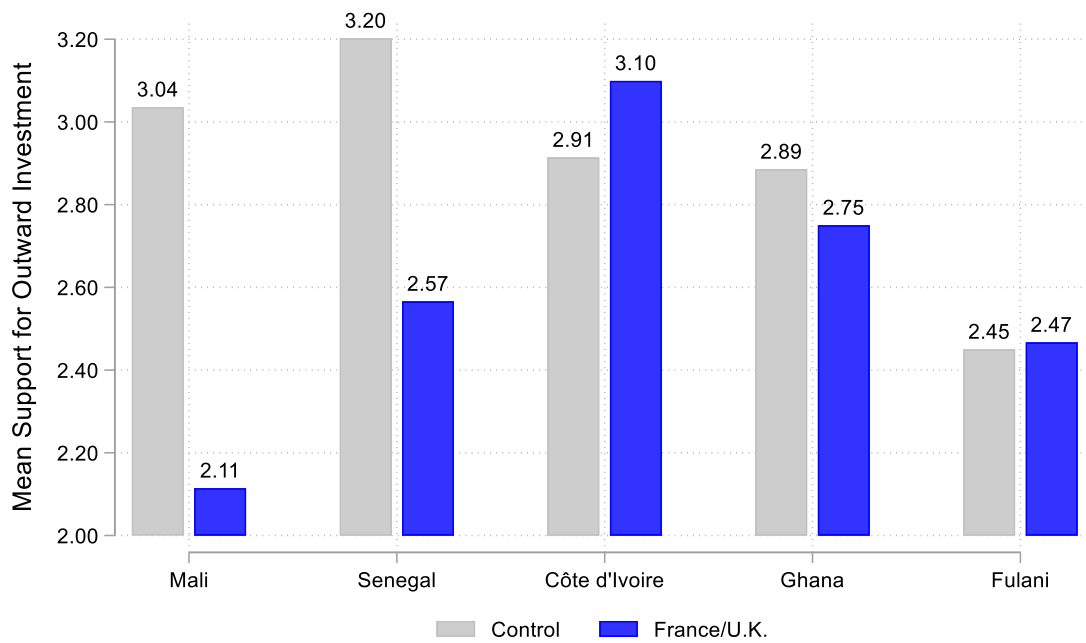


Figure 14. Treatment Effects on Investment Attitudes (outward) by Country and Version

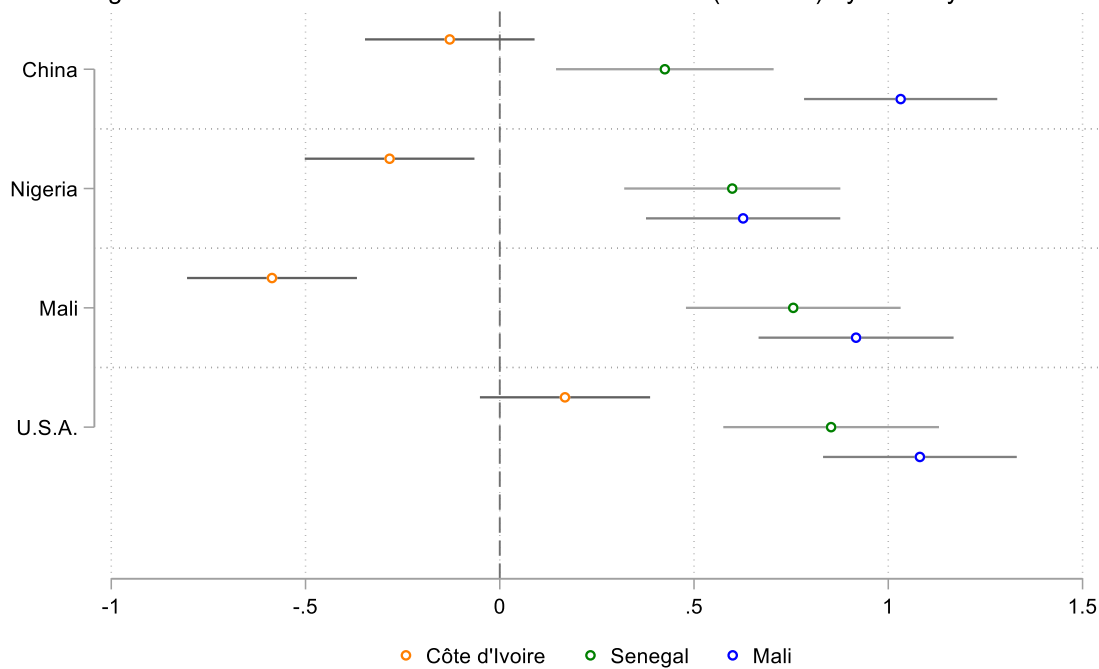


Figure 15. Predicted Values by Country and Version

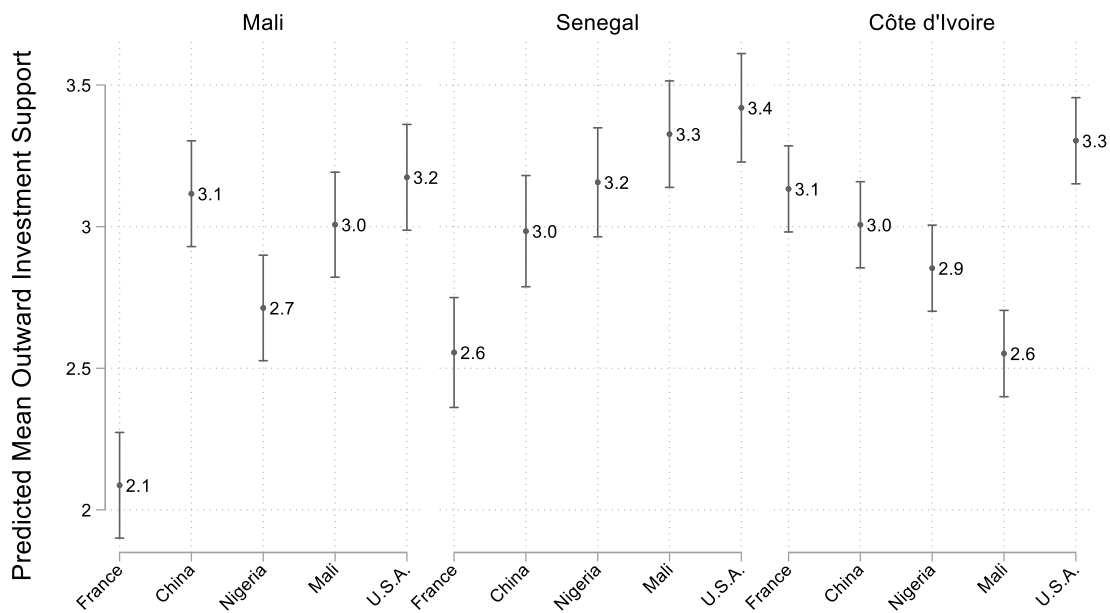


Figure 16. Views of Globalization Extended (Côte d'Ivoire)

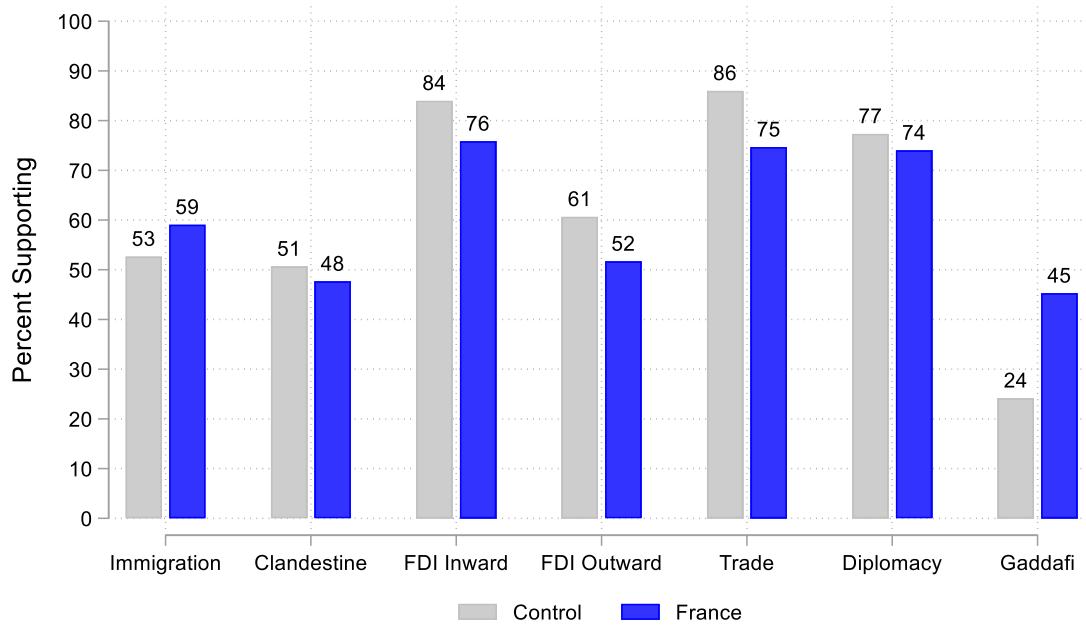
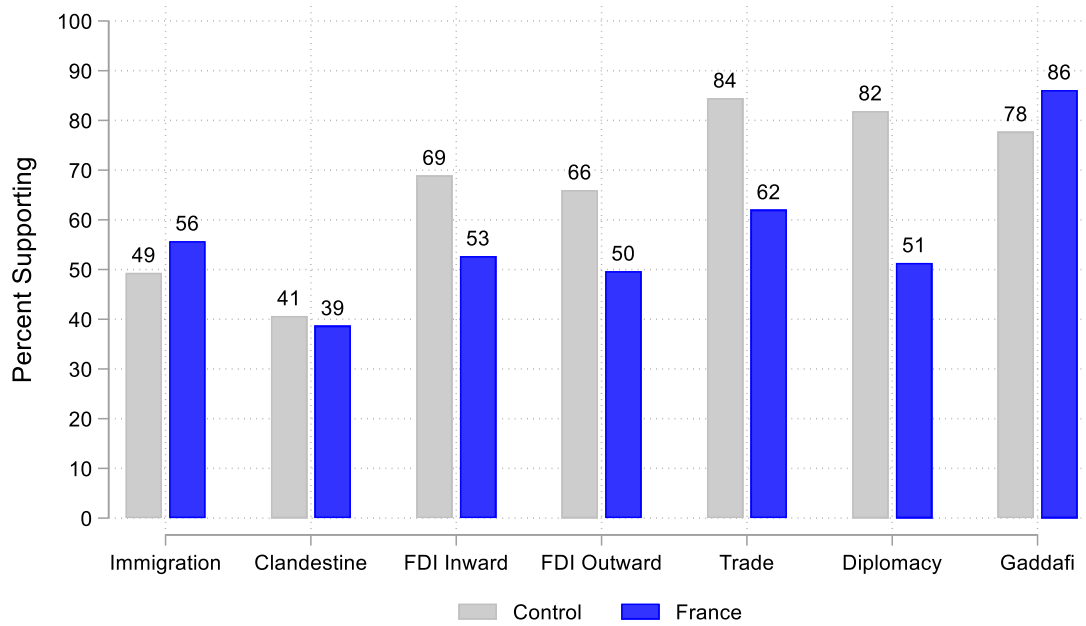


Figure 17. Views of Globalization Extended (Senegal)



Côte d'Ivoire

Senegal

60

Figure 19. Regression Coefficients for Positive Outcome

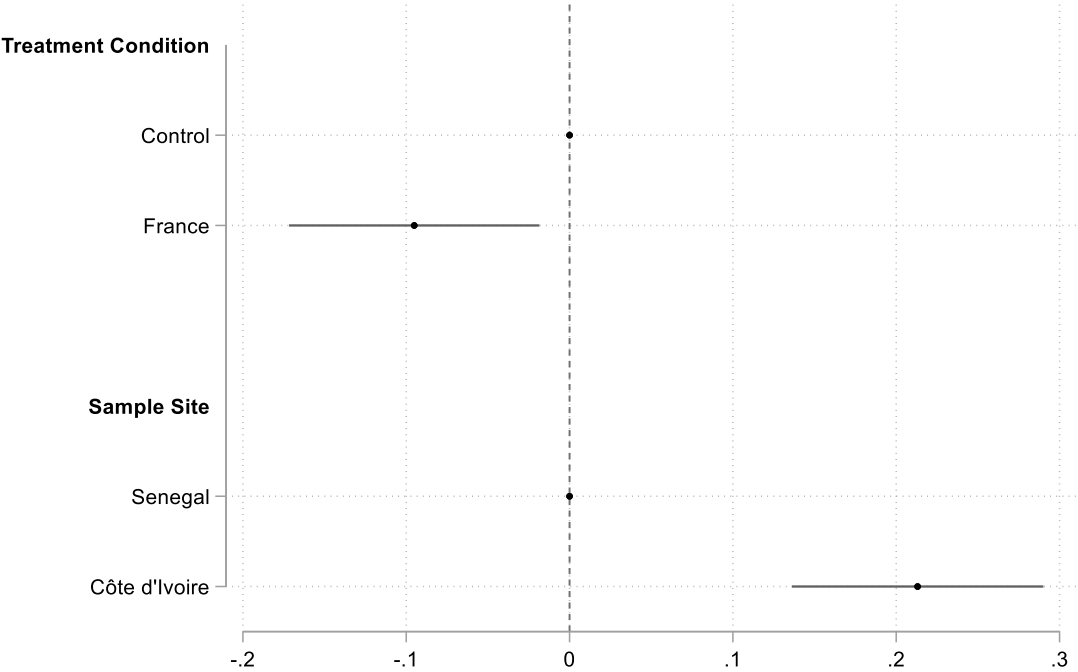


Figure 20. Views of Globalization with Protest Prime (Côte d'Ivoire)

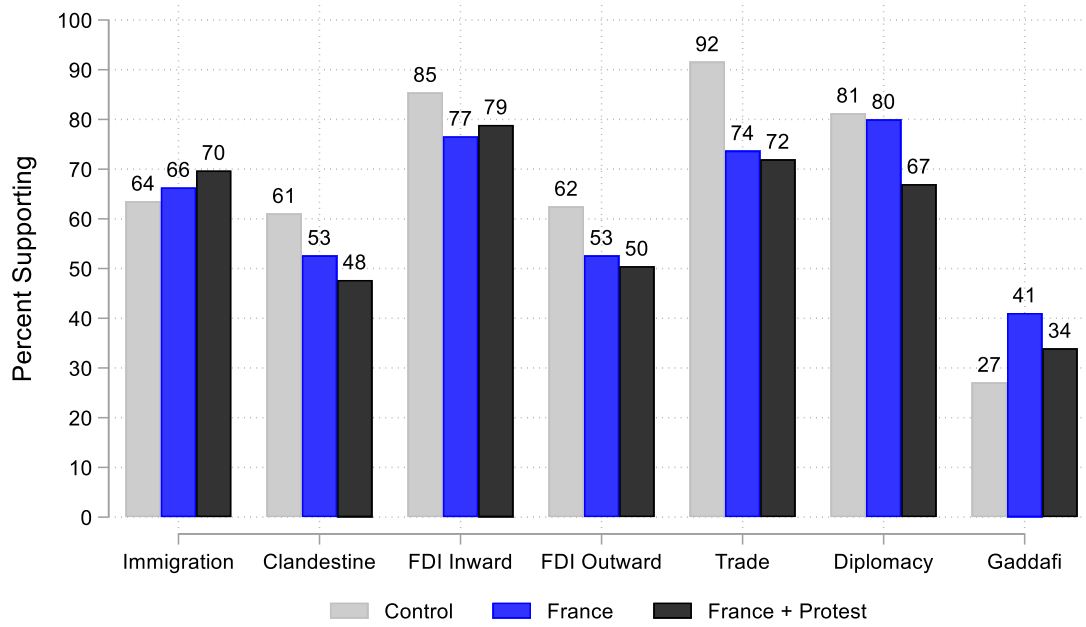


Figure 21. Views of Globalization with Protest Prime (Senegal)

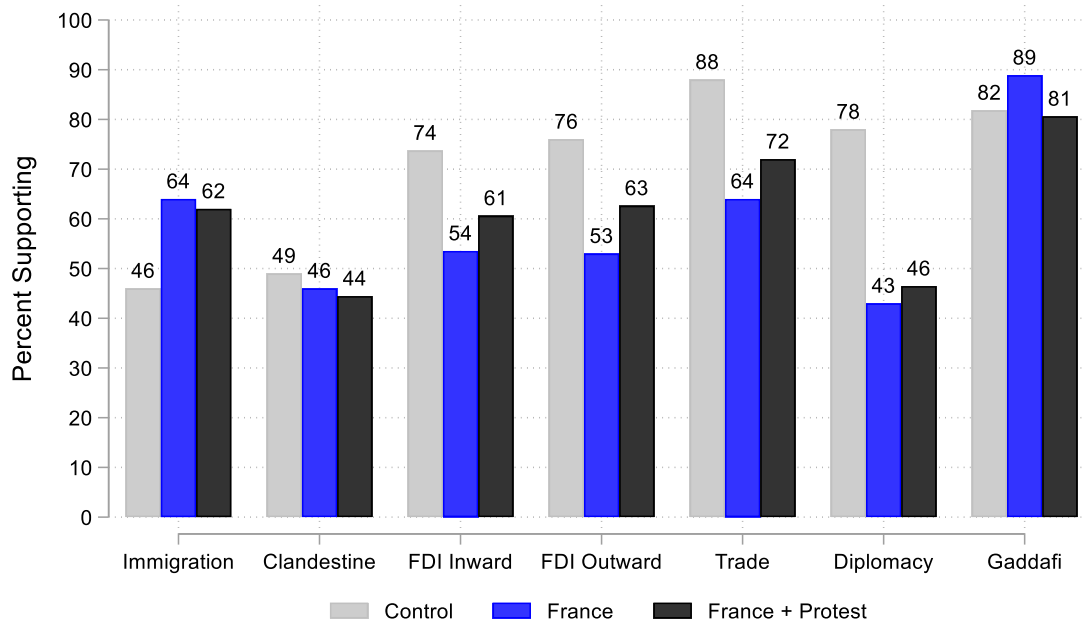


Figure 22. Effect of Treatments on View of Colonization

