
Goodbye, France: It's Going, it's Going, and Gone...

By: Arnaldo Musa / Cubasí
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Perhaps of the recent military coups in several African countries, the most worrying for the West has been the recent one in Niger, with military commanders trained in the United States, which is why they know inside out the imperial practices to undo any popular attempt, with the purpose of achieving sovereignty.

In this context, it ordered the retreat of the French troops stationed there, banned French aircrafts from flying over its territory and expelled the ambassadors of France, the United States, and Germany for interfering in the internal affairs of the nation.

Hence, the French Prime Minister, Emmanuel Macron, announced the diplomatic withdrawal and the retreat of all troops, although in stages, while other French military forces landed in neighboring nations, supported by the authorities of the US bases located there.

But Macron did not talk about this in an interview with TF1 and France 2, where he said that France will be "always available" to help Africa in the fight against jihadist terrorism, as long as it's at the request of democratically elected governments or of regional organizations. "The France-Africa is over (geopolitical concept that reflected the influence of Paris in its former African colonies); when there are coups d'état we do not intervene," he stated.

Since 2022, Niger has hosted a good part of the remaining troops of the French anti-jihadist operation Barkhane, which had been transferred from Mali, where a military board in power flatly rejected the French presence in its territory.

French influence over its former colonies has declined in West Africa lately. Its forces have been expelled from Mali and Burkina Faso since the coups in those countries, reducing their role in the regional fight against deadly Islamist insurgencies.

"We have been there because Niger asked us, Burkina Faso, Mali, to help them fight terrorism in their territories. Today those countries have been victims of coups d'état. Just today I spoke with President Bazoum, who is now

detained, because he carried out ambitious reforms," Macron detailed.

But the French president overlooked the fact that the French military has been ineffective in this regard, and that terrorist groups that have nothing to do with Islam have frequently been used to achieve French influence in areas rich in natural resources, like uranium in Niger, where they had the local workers virtually enslaved.

STORY

Niger is the latest West African country whose army has taken control after Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and Chad, all former French colonies.

The 78% of the 27 coups d'état in sub-Saharan Africa since 1990 have occurred in French-speaking nations, as a legacy of French colonialism.

Colonel Abdoulaye Maiga, appointed prime minister by the Malian military board in September 2022, launched a harsh attack against France.

After criticizing his "neocolonialist, condescending, paternalistic and vindictive policies", Maiga alleged that the European country "repudiated universal moral values" and stabbed Mali "in the back".

Anti-French resentment also flared in Burkina Faso, where the military government in February ended a years-long agreement that allowed French troops to operate in the country, giving France a month to withdraw its forces.

Historical records partially support these complaints. French colonial rule established political systems designed to extract valuable resources and keep control through repressive strategies.

So did British colonial rule, but what was distinctive about France's role in Africa was the extent to which it continued to participate (its critics would call it interference) in the politics and economics of its former territories after independence.

Seven out of the nine French-speaking states in West Africa still use the CFA franc, which is pegged to the euro and backed by France, as their currency, a legacy of French economic policy towards its colonies.

France also built defense agreements under which it regularly intervened militarily in defense of unpopular pro-French leaders to keep them in power.

In many cases, this fueled corrupt and abusive figures such as former Chadian president Idriss Déby and former Burkina Faso president Blaise Compaoré, hampering the fight for democracy.

Although France did not intervene militarily to reinstate any of the recently deposed heads of state, they were all seen as "pro-French."

Worse still: the relationship between French political leaders and their allies in Africa was often corrupt, creating a rich and powerful elite at the expense of the African people.

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