

Paris Wants to Show Strength, But Faces Geopolitical Crisis in Africa

By [Uriel Araujo](#)

Global Research, April 03, 2024

Region: [Europe](#), [sub-Saharan Africa](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

All Global Research articles can be read in 51 languages by activating the Translate Website button below the author's name (only available in desktop version).

To receive Global Research's Daily Newsletter (selected articles), [click here](#).

Click the share button above to email/forward this article to your friends and colleagues. Follow us on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) and subscribe to our [Telegram Channel](#). Feel free to repost and share widely Global Research articles.

[Global Research Referral Drive: Our Readers Are Our Lifeline](#)

Last week, Ruth Maclean, writing for the New York Times, reported on how democracy is stumbling in the Former French colonies in Africa – this is just part of the story, though. One may recall that on January 2, 2024, two weeks after the African country's coup, Paris announced it had closed down its embassy in Niger "until further notice".

The new Nigerien military leadership in fact expelled the French, after ousting and house-arresting the former leader Mohamed Bazoum (on July 26, 2023). Five military agreements with France [were revoked](#) by the military government in August last year, and the last contingent of the 1,500 troops Paris deployed in Niger left in December. This put an end to a decade of French anti-jihadist missions in the West African Sahel region. The French troops also left Mali and Burkina Faso, in what has been described as a "domino effect".

The Niger disaster (from a French perspective) was indeed preceded by the Mali disaster – not to mention [Chad](#). Apart from the local coups and foreign policy [shifts](#), there is a change in the political and emotional climate as well. Macron, like other French leaders, might talk about a "communauté de destin" or a common destiny in Africa, especially in the so-called Franc Zone, but African leaders and public opinion are increasingly hearing "neocolonialism" instead.

French neocolonial hold over part of Africa in fact materializes in many forms, which include a military presence, but also monetary institutions. All of them are being questioned.

Take Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni spot-on comments on a 2019 [video](#) (which resurfaced in 2022), for instance. In her recorded talk, which caused quite a fuss, Meloni exposed France's [neocolonial grip](#) over 14 former colonies in West Africa and Central Africa, all of which still employ the CFA Franc, a colonial currency issued by Paris, the CFA standing for "Communauté Financière Africaine" (French for "African Financial Community"). Her

points should to be taken seriously.

Italian Prime Minister [@GiorgiaMeloni](#) delivered this powerful and fiery speech exposing France's ongoing economic imperialism in Africa. pic.twitter.com/AwKufINILb

— 5Pillars (@5Pillarsuk) [November 20, 2022](#)

To be more precise, there are two currencies both currently called “CFA Franc”: one is the West African CFA franc, and the other is the Central African CFA franc. The former is used by the West African nations of Niger, Mali, Senegal, Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, and Togo. All these countries are part of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), and the West African CFA franc is actually issued by the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO), located in Dakar (Senegal). The CFA franc notes themselves, however, since the currency’s creation in 1945, have been produced by the Bank of France at Chamalières. The currency was introduced by French colonial authorities, replacing the previous French West African franc.

The Central African CFA franc in turn (whose notes are also produced by the Bank of France since colonial times) is the currency of the Republic of the Congo, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon.

This monetary situation has been the target of much African [criticism](#) and angry [protests](#) over the last years. Among other things, with both CFA currencies, the central banks of all of the African nations involved are to keep at least 50% of their foreign assets in the French Treasury, which supposedly keeps the currency stable, at the cost of limiting the economic independence of these nations.

The fixed exchange rate has affected the Central African economies mostly, due to their high levels of excess liquidity (from oil revenues) – and also the West African ones, which suffer from external shocks, [according to](#) Landry Signé, a senior fellow in the Global Economy and Development Program and the Africa Growth Initiative at the Brookings Institution. Signé argues that the CFA franc zone has brought about an intense vulnerability to such external shocks, has limited intra-regional trade in Central Africa, has narrowed the industrial base, and has made countries highly dependent on producing a limited number of primary commodities to be exported. It does sound quite colonial, doesn’t it?

It is no wonder the larger Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), of which the members of UEMOA are also members, is planning to introduce its own common currency for its member by 2027

Paris is currently involved in a competition with Moscow in Africa, for providing security and counter-terrorism assistance. This can be seen in the Libya crisis too, which has been a major setback for France and a real “end of an era” development. The problem, for Paris, is that anti-French feelings are on the rise in the African continent (from the Sahel to Central Africa and West Africa), with political repercussions, while pro-Russian feelings are far from being a new thing in the region: since the early decolonization period in the 1950s, the Soviet Union supported a large part of the African independence struggles.

Macron’s recent sudden [“tougher” stance on Russia](#), which actually started to gradually take

shape last year, has also a lot to do with Paris' attempt to show strength (that is, greater autonomy from Washington) and to "flex muscle", preparing for a [Trump presidency scenario](#).

One should not expect too much from Trump's supposed [isolationism](#) – any American president can only do so much when it comes to countering the US "[double government](#)" system. Likewise, one should not bet on Paris' (or Berlin, for that matter) flirt with "[strategic autonomy](#)". European powers, France included, are too entwined in NATO's structures to go too far in that regard – and Paris now faces its own geopolitical crisis in Africa and abroad. It is quite possible Washington will feel the need to get more and more involved in Africa in any case, with [Biden's redeployment of US forces in Somalia](#) being perhaps just a warm-up – despite its [failure](#).

*

Note to readers: Please click the share button above. Follow us on Instagram and Twitter and subscribe to our Telegram Channel. Feel free to repost and share widely Global Research articles.

This article was originally published on [InfoBrics](#).

Uriel Araujo is a researcher with a focus on international and ethnic conflicts. He is a regular contributor to Global Research.

Featured image is from The Cradle

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Uriel Araujo](#), Global Research, 2024

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Uriel Araujo](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca