

Humanitarian Warfare: “Stabilizing” Central Africa for the Multinationals

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[Agenda](#)

On December 5th, yet another war led by foreign powers broke out in Africa, and like the one in Mali, it was led at the helm by the French. The UN Security Council [unanimously passed a resolution](#) which authorized the deployment of French and African troops in the Central African Republic. At the same time, Chad, Cameroon, South Africa, Angola, Morocco, Burundi, Rwanda, the Republic of Congo, and other African countries, sent troops. Other countries like the UK, Germany, Spain, Denmark and Poland provided [logistical support](#), while Belgium and the US provided air support by transporting the peacekeeping troops.

To pay for this war, which is a huge expense, France paid a good portion, along with the US pitching [in \\$60 million](#), and Canada even pitching in a little. On January 20th, the full financing of international donors will come into view as EU and UN donors [will meet](#) and decide how much money they are giving to support the intervention. All the while, high-level UN officials have said that “[a strong peacekeeping force](#)” is needed in the Central African Republic and that 6,000 to 9,000 UN Peacekeepers would be needed to “[stabilize the country](#).” This brings one to the question of who or what is being stabilized by the military intervention in the Central African Republic and what the real goals are, other than professed humanitarian reasons.

There is already some signs that the stabilization is not going very well for the population of the Central African Republic. 935,000 [have been displaced](#) by the conflict in the country, with more than 74% being internally displaced and more than 26% leaving to neighboring countries according to the UN High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR). As a recent [Reuters article](#) noted, “the deployment of 1,600 French and nearly 4,000 African Union peacekeepers has done little to contain the tit-for-tat violence between religious communities.” Already, numerous French troops and AU peacekeepers have died in action while many residents of the country continue to be killed, wounded, mutilated, and beheaded, numbers which grow day by day. The humanitarian crisis continues to get worse with [over 600,000 internally displaced](#) by December 30th of 2013. This is compounded by the fact that the President and his family, who came to power in a coup last year, [have fled the country](#) for Benin.

France: the gendarme of Africa?

What Roosevelt says connects to the fact that the French multinational nuclear energy company, Areva “mines the Bakouma uranium deposit in the CAR’s south” which [Reuters describes](#) as “France’s biggest commercial interest in its former colony.” [6] This reality runs deep into the reasons for intervention. As Francois Hollande, the fake socialist and really neoliberal, president of France, [declared](#) to the government-owned Radio France

Internationale (RFI), that while the “intervention will cost about 400-500 million euros...[which] may seem like a lot, especially at a time when we have budget constraints and we demand sacrifices of French people” it is based in the “role of France” he believes to be true: “the responsibility of France...is to be a world power.”

That same day, Hollande [told the Telegraph](#) that “we think that it should not cost France anything as I have spoken to you of European financing...I would hope that they [European Union] can contribute more, be in the forces that we could mutualise.” Only the day before, he had [said at end of a summit](#) between France and African leaders that 1,600 troops in the Central African Republic will be “a number that will remain as long as necessary for this mission.” In that same article, an anonymous source from the French defense ministry source claimed that “there were patrols all night, including some on foot. We are going everywhere.”

This is partially confirmed by the fact that “French jets and surveillance aircraft” flew over parts of the country, while in the neighboring country, the Democratic Republic of Congo, five [drones were deployed](#) in the first use of “unmanned surveillance aircraft” by the UN for “peacekeeping efforts.” As for Hollande, drones were not his major aim, but rather it was mounting a rhetorical defense of the intervention by [telling a group of French troops](#) that it was “necessary if one wants to avoid carnage here” and that “it was time to act. It was soon going to be too late.” He added that fighting in the country was “taking on a religious dimension with the risk of leading to a civil war” and that “France is not here in the CAR out of any self-interest. France has come to defend human dignity.” These words seemed to echo what he said [back in October](#), at a meeting with South African President Jacob Zuma: “there is a political emergency because there is no state. There is also an emergency at a regional level because there is a risk of spillover. We might witness religious conflict.”

What Hollande is saying is only the beginning of French officials covering and defending the intervention. In a purportedly non-interventionist manner, Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius [declared that](#) since “the democratic situation has been re-established,” France doesn’t need to provide assistance or “get involved” in the troubles in Mali, but that: “France intervened and we can say it saved Mali. But it’s not up to us to be the gendarme of Africa.” A gendarme is “a police officer in any of several European countries, esp. in France,” [6] which in this context would be the policeman of Africa, since neo-colonial domination is deeply patriarchal. The idea that France is not ‘policing’ is frankly absurd. As a Reuters article [reminds us](#), the Central African Republic “has seen little stability in five decades, and France has intervened more times since independence in 1960 than in any of its former colonies” which is partially evidenced by the fact that “under a 1960 defence accord, [France is obligated](#) to intervene in the event of foreign aggression.”

This is why some say that France has conducted a forty-year secret war [in Central Africa](#). In the last sentence of an article in The Telegraph, which almost seems to be an afterthought, it [importantly points out](#) that “since 2011, France has intervened in four African states: in Ivory Coast...in Libya, in Mali and now in the Central African Republic.” Only a few days before the intervention in Central Africa officially began, France quietly sent [more troops](#) to complement the 2,600 African Union troops then in the country and in later November, as the [Christian Science Monitor noted](#), France planned “to boost its force there to around 1,000 troops to restore law and order until a much bigger African Union force fully deploys.” In all of Africa, France has 6,275 troops as of December 2013, [the most recent information](#), which is between 74-75% of its overseas deployments. If this isn’t enough, at the end of the summit between Africa leaders and French officials on December 8th,

[Hollande pledged](#) to “help the African Union turn its plans for a rapid reaction force into a functioning unit by 2015” by offering “to provide equipment, logistical support and training for 20,000 troops from the continent every year for five years” while trying to persuade “Britain, Germany and other EU partners to help finance the equipment and arms the new force will require.” This huge commitment is a sign of France’s lasting presence in Africa, especially over in its former colonies.

There is something that proves Hollande was wrong: a war for securing resources, blatant imperialism. Unlike Obama’s [speech at the UN](#), French politicians haven’t in recent years blatantly declared their imperialist motives. With the war in Libya, many nations rushed in to support the rebel forces officially for humanitarian reasons, but really about acquiring or protecting the oil supply. Like in Mali, France also [led the charge](#), with the objectives being about making sure that uranium reserves in Niger were untouched by violence, and possibly also helping international mining companies as well. These events must be seen in context of the overall French foreign policy in regards to Africa. A document written by Paul Melly and Vincent Darracq for the London think tank, Chatham House, [in May 2013](#), describes this policy well, noting that: “France wields a level of influence in sub-Saharan Africa that it cannot command anywhere else in the world...Africa accounts for 3 per cent of France’s exports and remains an important supplier of oil and metals...[such as] uranium...sub-Saharan Africa is an important market for French logistics, service, telecoms and infrastructure companies.”

The policy that Chatham House describes is definitely active in the Central African Republic. In 2008, the majority French state-owned multinational corporation, Areva, [7] signed a “[uranium mining deal](#) with Central African Republic” but only a year earlier, Francois Bozize, the President of the Central African Republic who was ousted, said that the acquisition of UraMin by Areva “[without our consent](#)” and said that he wouldn’t let the country’s economy “be bandied about in a game between capitalists on the London Stock Exchange.” Over two years later, Areva “suspended its uranium mining project in the Central African Republic for two years” [due to a fall in prices](#) in uranium after the Fukushima disaster, which means it was scheduled to reopen operations in November 2012 and “ramp[ing] up to full production in 2014-15” as noted by the [World Nuclear Association](#). It is important to remember, that as [the World Bank noted](#), Areva also “controls most of Niger’s uranium industry.” With the tensions between numerous groups, Areva, as noted by Bloomberg News, [began removing](#) employees from their Bakouma uranium mine after an attack the previous year. There were been numerous attacks on Areva properties including one [in January](#) in which hundreds attacked a uranium exploration site, taking “computers and looted houses” and another, well-known one, in June, with [gunmen attacking a uranium plant](#) and doing some material damage to a site “considered important by Areva.” Still, France did not intervene.

The importance of the uranium mine and exploration in the country likely got the attention of the French government. As an article in The Guardian [in January 2013](#) noted, France has 250 troops in the country at the time, with the government saying that it would “only deploy them to protect its embassy and other interests” and the article then noted that “there are around 1,200 French citizens in the country, many working for mining firms, such as French nuclear giant Areva, which has a significant uranium mine in south-east CAR.” If this couldn’t be made any clearer, [a BBC article](#) around the same time pointed out that “France... dispatched additional troops to the country to protect its nationals, many of whom work in Areva’s large uranium mine at Bakouma in the south-east of the country.” The underlying truth should be clear: France deployed the troops to protect the uranium

operations conducted by Areva. Since the France's "main source of electricity generation is nuclear power" as noted [by the Energy Information Agency](#) (EIA) of the US Department of Energy, uranium deposits would be important for their national security. In May 2012, [Juliette Poirson wrote](#) on the site of the World Information Service on Energy, a review of a book by Raphael Granvaud titled *Areva en Afrique* (Areva in Africa), that "the great development of French civilian and military nuclear power have been possible thanks to the exploitation of the soil of French African colonies....and then of African independent countries" making "French energy independence" a myth which is further proven by the continuing "collusion between politics and interests of the French nuclear industry." This conclusion, that the war is related to France's security connected to a mineral, uranium is held by others across the board and is the main reason for intervening in the country.

French-backed currency, the EU and African elite

The French-led imperialist war, as it should be called, is not only in their hands, but also that of the African-led force called MISCA. The Lieutenant General Babacar Gaye, [who leads the mission](#), graduated from École Spéciale Militaire de Saint-Cyr (ESM), the premier military academy in France, seemingly their version of West Point. This force includes soldiers who have been transferred from the Multinational Force of Central Africa, an AU military mission, which was comprised of soldiers from Gabon, Chad, Republic of Congo, and Cameroon along with those serving as part of [MICROPAX](#), a peacekeeping mission led by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), which is part of the AU.

This is important to point out, because it directly connects to France's economic policy in regards to Central Africa. As the founder Christof Lehmann [writes](#) on the online newspaper, NSNBC International, and political consultant, the Central African CFA Franc, the currency of the all of the states of ECCAS, "is printed under supervision of the French National Bank," but is issued by the region's central bank the Bank of Central African States (BEAC) which France has veto power over. All the while, "foreign currency reserves...[are] subject to deposition" in the central bank of France, Banque de France, including those which are gold. He says all of these things are, in his view, "indebting and enslaving Africans by means of Africa's own wealth" and are "not only bleeding Africa...[but] increasingly bleeding both the French and European economies." This is only the tip of the iceberg.

The West African CFA franc, is printed in a similar manner, and is also "[guaranteed by the French treasury](#)" and France also has a veto over the region's central bank, called the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO). This means that fourteen countries in total have their currencies, which are [pegged to the Euro](#), guaranteed by Banque de France, which is linked to the European Central Bank, a total of over 123 million people, a massive exploitation by the French government of poor Africans. This is important to note, because it could be a reason for intervention by European states, along with the EU's involvement [in Central Africa's Rainforests](#) and the [recent declaration](#) that the EU is considering deploying an additional 1,000 troops to the country.

The deep connection between the French state and the fourteen African governments, is likely a motivator for some members to send troops to the Central African Republic, not the bribes and support that the government gave African dictators in the past.[8] This shows that Cornel West was right: "African and Latin American regimes [are] still grappling with postcolonial European and U.S. economic domination." [9] Interestingly, Dembassa Worogagoi, the ambassador of said country appointed by Bozize, asked for help from the French at the UN [on November 25th](#): "it is during difficult times that we recognize our

friends” and [also said](#) that day that the country would like to see the “the African-led MISCA...supported and equipped by the United Nations, with the logistical support of France.”

While some say that France wants to overthrow the current government, one can’t be so sure. After all, the current prime minister of the Central African Republic, Nicolas Tiangaye, a choice of the rebels, went to the summit of African leaders. According to [the International Business Times](#), he “welcomed the French intervention and called for international support,” saying that the country needed “massive humanitarian aid...[because] there is a risk of famine.” It is important to remember that the rebel government, led by Djotodia [has promised](#) “to review all mining deals, but those awarded to richer states are likely to be secure [including] the French billion dollar uranium project in Bakouma...and...[the] Canadian gold mining company Axmin Inc” which was recently approved by an interim council. WSWS [added to this](#), noting that the “Djotodia...already announced that he will review the CAR’s mining and oil contracts with China, signed by the Bozizé government.” Despite this, on December 8th, Hollande [said](#) “I don’t want to point fingers but we cannot keep in place a president who was not able to do anything, or even worse, who let things happen,” and that he wants Djotodia to go and have elections to replace him as “fast as possible.”

Sources [tell Reuters](#) that Michel Djotodia “is due to step down at a summit of regional leaders” partly because other African leaders had run out of patience with him. Part of the reason Canada is involved in the country is that Axamin, a Canadian international mining company, has a gold mine, called the Passendro Gold Project, to which the company claimed had a total reserve of [1.4 million ounces of gold](#) which is equivalent of approximately 3,348 gold bars. At the same time, South Africa, Angola, Burundi, Rwanda and the Republic of Congo, have their own reasons, to enrich their elite or to maintain regional stability to join in the fight. In the end, French credit insurer COFACE writes on their profile of the Central African Republic, that [insecurity in the country](#) “is curbing investment development” while “growth, which leads into the reasons the US joined in the scramble.

The business of America in Africa is business

When the war began, the United States government didn’t hold back at endorsing the intervention. Current National Security Adviser Susan Rice, who holds assets in Bank of America, Deutsche Bank, Honda, AOL, Monsanto, Shell, TransCanada, McDonalds, [and other corporations](#), according to her most recent financial disclosure report, remarked at the Human Rights First Annual Summit, [a day before the intervention](#), that the US is taking “on the deteriorating situation and increasing violence in the Central African Republic” by “working this week at the UN to support African Union forces protecting civilians, to provide humanitarian assistance, and to investigate human rights abuses so the perpetrators can be held accountable.” The next day, Press Secretary Jay Carney [wrote that](#) the UN resolution was “an important step in preventing further atrocities or an escalation of the violence,” and that African and French forces will “protect civilians, restore security, and ensure humanitarian access” while the US government evaluates what it will do next. Only a few days later, Obama [made a plea](#) for the warring factions in the country to “reject violence” and he said that the US government will support the intervention in Central African Republic, which he said will “protect civilians.”

As the next month rolled by, the US first said that it was providing [\\$40 million](#) in aid, then [by December 19th](#), it was “\$101 million in support for restoring security” in the country which

was mostly of a military nature. Aid wasn't all: the US began ferrying African troops to the Central African Republic [on December 9th](#), an action which was [requested by the French](#).

At the same time, the US has special forces in the country, which are not counted as boots on the ground, as noted by a Washington Post article [in April 2012](#) and President Obama's [message to Congress](#) in December. In this message, Obama wrote that there were a number of officially deemed 'counterterrorism' operations in Africa: "the capturing longtime al-Qa'ida member Abu Anas al Libi" in Libya, a military raid in Somalia, the stationing of 200 military personnel in Niger to provide intelligence for French troops who are still in Mali, the continued deployment of 120 military personnel in Central Africa officially to go after Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), 715 military personnel staying in Egypt as part of the "Multinational Force and Observers" and others staying in Libya. On top of this, as noted by [a map](#) of US and French military operations in Africa, made by Philippe Rekacewicz, the US gives military aid in the form of training special forces to Mali, Niger, Chad, Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Kenya, Mauritania, and Senegal, along with a US naval presence off the coast of Gabon, a US base in Djibouti.

That's not all. In almost a band across the middle of the continent, the United States has deployed special forces and other military personnel, as a map complementing [an article](#) in Foreign Policy magazine points out. Near the Central African Republic, the US even has numerous flight bases, specifically in South Sudan, Niger, Burkina Faso and Uganda as noted [by Public Intelligence](#).

While increased US presence in Africa could lay the groundwork for intervention, this is not really what is at stake. The answer lies in the official documents that set the foundation for US national security policy. The first of these is the [current National Security Strategy](#), which is due to be [replaced this year](#) with a new one that last the rest of his years. There is a major focus on the Middle East and North Africa, just like the speech Obama [made to the UN](#), but the document still says "...as long as we are dependent on fossil fuels, we need to ensure the security and free flow of global energy resources...We will stimulate our energy economy at home, reinvigorate the U.S. domestic nuclear industry." One could make a logical connection to the uranium deposits, saying that the US government wants to secure those in central Africa to help the domestic nuclear industry, but no government policy or action shows this to be true. Involvement in the intervention of central Africa doesn't even seem to be connected to US's non-tolerant attitude toward an energy supply cut off in North Africa and the Mideast. The US, through covert methods which are "out of the public eye" have expanded in Africa, along with [so-called access agreements](#) that allows deep cooperation between the US military and African forces. In fact, the US has engaged in a war for oil in Africa already: [Libya in 2011](#), which was to protect the volatile oil markets and secure better contracts for international petroleum corporations, the first major war the US has had in Africa since the Barbary Wars of the early 1800s which one of the first public displays through military might of the [dirty energy doctrine](#). Additionally, the positioning of US special forces in Uganda officially to go after Joseph Kony was "likely because of huge oil deposits" [in the country](#), the U.S. government is also concerned about oil [in the Sudans](#), assistance in Mali was seemingly connected to oil deposits, and there is a growing importance of African oil to the United States, since 25% of US oil consumption is estimated to come from West Africa by 2015 [as noted by Chatham House](#). AFRICOM or Africa Command, which was created in 2008, is related to this phenomenon and is connected to the growing empire of bases across the continent while engaging in war where terror is invoked but resources are the real underlying reason. Let us not forget that the Obama

Administration has used the US armed forces more times in Africa than any other President in US history.[10]

As for the Central African Republic, the reason for US assistance mainly seems to lie in something different than just a hunt for resources. Valerie Jarrett, Obama's senior advisor, [said ominously](#) that "we all know that Africa is the new center of global growth." I'm not sure who 'we' is referring to but I can infer that 'global growth' means the expansion of the wealth of the rich through corporate investments, individual finances and so on. The quote by Jarrett was tied into the hoopla over Obama's trip to Africa, in June 2013, described in Jarrett's same blogpost which outlined the trip's three main goals: increasing US trade and investment, creating "strong democratic institutions," and training the "next generation of African leaders." The last one is possibly more important than the others because if these new leaders, if they get into office, will have a positive impression of the United States, likely influencing them to make sure that American multinationals are favored while cooperating with and assisting continued US military domination over Africa. There is one document written in June 2012 titled [US Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa](#) that seems to be part of the puzzle of why the U.S. is involved in Central Africa. Like the goals of the Africa tour, it has a focus on creating powerful democratic institutions which could be part of hidden goal to great 'big government' that would help the rich and powerful. There is more: the strategy says the U.S. government should "promote opportunity and development" through supposedly encouraging measures to address social inequality, "spur economic growth, trade [and] investment" by creating a friendly business climate, promoting "regional integration," improving "economic governance," helping Africans effectively "access and benefit from global markets," and finally encouraging "U.S. companies to trade with and invest in Africa." This is all capped by efforts to "advance peace and security" or stabilize Sub-Saharan Africa which would create a better business climate to bring U.S. businesses in, which is exactly what the U.S. government is supporting by backing the military intervention in the Central African Republic.

The low trade between the US and the Central African Republic, and paltry amounts of seemingly humanitarian aid by USAID, doesn't invalidate the push for investment in Central Africa, but rather strengthens it. After all, the current economic circumstances for business are rocky: Global Edge gives the country [a D rating](#) for the business climate. They write that while "agricultural potential, forest and mining wealth" along with IMF support is a plus, there are numerous weaknesses of the country's investment climate such as an "economy vulnerable to internal and external shocks...geographic isolation...unstable political and security situation" and poor infrastructure. This brings one to the point that the country is underdeveloped and needs to be developed.

The U.S. is [already committed](#) to supporting "private sector engagement and investment in Africa through three Africa regional trade hubs," which is part of the U.S. government initiative that claims to tackle food insecurity in Africa: Feed the Future, along with a number of other programs to move forward with ["economic growth" in Africa](#) while the US [pushes for increased trade](#) with selected countries in East Africa. For the US, no such investment like that of numerous country-specific and continent-specific investment banks, which have offices in the country, exists, but it could. There is one likely contender that could swoop in: not the big banks or oil companies, but the technology giants. The reason for this is partly because the technology giants have deep support from the Obama administration, like the mainstay of the Democratic Party. The strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa, which I mentioned earlier, calls for "technology [that] will further support the region's

economic expansion.” More importantly, [every country in Africa](#) has internet cable running through a majority of its territory except Gabon, Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Eritrea, Somalia, and the Central African Republic.

These tech companies have already been pushing to close this gap, using their best efforts and all the resources at their disposal to expand into a new market. In an article [in the Seattle Times](#), the power of Microsoft and other companies in Africa is fully explained. This article noted that in recent years, Microsoft, “IBM, Google, Intel, Hewlett Packard and other tech companies...have expanded their presence in Africa” because many countries have “become more stable” and able to work with multinational corporations like themselves. In order to accommodate these projects and future “business potential” in the billions of dollars, these technology companies are building “tech infrastructure...bringing faster broadband connections to Africa’s coasts and terrestrial cables to extend these networks inland” while also investing in increased internet access and other infrastructure. Other articles noted the same boom in investment, with The Economist [boasting in February 2013](#) that the information technology coming to the continent was “the next frontier” since “mobile-phone and internet penetration in Africa is sharply on the rise.”

Another article [in The Economist](#) also notes how Google is a ‘hit’ in Africa, possibly becoming the “single biggest private-sector influence in Africa” which is operating in a realm where there is little regulation and they have much power. All of these developments come together with technology companies wanting a new market, which consists of the 30% food insecure Central African Republic. This is proven by the fact that UPS is the only big American multinational that has an office in the country. All of this ties into the [National Strategy for Global Supply Chain Security](#) which says that the US government will “promote the efficient and secure movement of goods,” make sure the global supply chain is not disrupted and while working to “promote America’s future economic growth and international competitiveness by remaining open for businesses to the world.”

Still, resource interests still play some part in the US reasons for assisting in the intervention of Central Africa, which in this case is oil, rather than mineral interests. As a [June 2013 fact sheet](#) for the seemingly [pro-dirty energy project](#) launched during Obama’s trip to Africa, Power Africa, notes, “the recent discoveries of oil and gas in Sub-Saharan Africa will play a critical role in defining the region’s prospects for economic growth and stability, as well as contributing to broader near-term global energy security.” At the same time, the [Engineering and Technology Magazine](#) points out, five countries dominate the upstream oil production of Africa: Nigeria, Libya, Algeria, Egypt, and Angola. Refugees from Central Africa, that aren’t in the majority who have been internally displaced, are fleeing to oil-rich South Sudan, resource-rich Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo, Cameroon, and Chad, all which could be destabilized.

The last two of these countries is the most important to the US reasons for assisting in the intervention in Central Africa and is connected to the [expanding amount of roads and pipelines](#) being “built or envisioned into the interior of Central Africa from multiple directions,” none which penetrate the resource-rich Congo. This is refined on page five of TransNet’s [Pipeline Development Plan](#), which notes that none of the proposed gas, crude or liquid fuel pipelines in Africa will be anywhere near the Central African Republic, but only one existing pipeline is nearby: the Chad-Cameroon pipeline. This pipeline runs through the middle of Cameroon by beginning at a marine terminal outside the city of Krel, continuing along and near the border of the Central African Republic and ending outside the Chadian city of Kome.

This pipeline, as dutifully noted on website of the pipeline project, [has four main partners](#): the governments of Chad and Cameroon, the World Bank, and a “consortium of three energy companies” that built the pipeline: ExxonMobil (40%) which was the pipeline’s operator, Malaysian multinational Petronas (35%), and Chevron (25%). The latter corporation is directly connected to the Obama administration because Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel used to be on the board of directors of Chevron, and pro-fracking Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz who was part of the corporate funded MIT Energy Initiative, with companies like Chevron, BP and Shell giving money while many other people in Obama’s [corporatist administration](#) have ties to Big Business. Still, while there are other pipelines being developed in Africa like the proposed [Trans-Saharan pipeline](#), [the East African pipeline](#), the [Kenya-Uganda pipeline](#), only the pipelines coming out of South Sudan and Nigeria seem close enough to be affected. Protecting dirty energy in the Republic of Congo as a reason for assisting in the intervention, is affirmed through the fact that while French multinational Total S.A. And Italian Eni dominate the oil and gas sector, Chevron has its place, and “Congo holds the fifth-largest proven natural gas reserves in Sub-Saharan Africa” according [to the EIA](#).

In closing, for the US, the reasons for helping out the French-led effort seem to be clear and revolve around stabilizing the country from violence committed by rebels who are coming from South Sudan and Chad, or other countries: create a friendly business climate likely for American tech giants, and protect the Chad-Cameroon pipeline along with oil in the Republic of Congo from strife or disturbance.

Left in the dust: China, India, and Russia

The competition in Africa has gone to new heights: not only is the US competing with China, but also with the European countries, India, and Russia in a “[scramble for Africa’s many resources](#) including oil...diamonds and gold to land for agricultural investment” along with a push to create a friendly climate for their country’s investors. Of these competitors, China is the most potent as it has major investments “across the continent and has surpassed the U.S. as [Africa’s largest trading partner](#).” Even so, its military presence doesn’t even meet that of the US, but uses of the Chinese military in Africa are slowly growing. As John Reed noted in Foreign Policy magazine on July 2013, “for the second time in little over a year, China has infantry on the ground in Africa, reflecting the Chinese military’s increasing global presence.” In another article about China’s involvement in Africa, American University professor Debroah Brautigam [dispels some myths about China](#), describing the smaller-than-expected amount of aid the country gives to Africa which is not really given because of a want for natural resources, China working with all sorts of regimes across the continent, not just Sudan and Zimbabwe, but ones like South Africa, whose president, Jacob Zuma, visited China in 2010, and much more. Most importantly, in the closing part of her article, Brautigam writes that “China is now a powerful force in Africa, and the Chinese are not going away. Their embrace of the continent is strategic, planned, long-term and still unfolding.” The investment power of the Chinese in the continent is what one could call Renminbi Diplomacy, named after the official currency of China, is almost a 21st century version of William Howard Taft’s ‘dollar diplomacy’ except the aims of China in Africa are furthered through the economic power of guaranteeing investments, rather than loans. Additionally, the mutualistic approach and persistence keeps Chinese companies in place, not brute force like military interventions or covert actions that topple or destabilize governments.

In the Central African Republic, Renminbi Diplomacy has been developing since 2009.[11]

That year, the country [called on China for investment](#). Bozize told Hu Jintao, then the President of China (the current president is Xi Jinping), that their country welcomed “Chinese enterprises to come and invest” and Jintao responded, stating that both countries should “strengthen and push forward our economic and trade competition.” Later that year, Jintao [made four proposals](#) to strengthen ties with the Central African Republic while Bozize was on a state visit: have better communication on “major issues and important affairs,” making sure that both countries have mutually beneficial “economic and trade cooperation,” having “personnel and cultural exchanges” between the two countries; and having better coordination in multilateral affairs.” Even by this time, BBC [was declaring](#) that China was an “increasingly important commercial partner” for the Central African Republic, adding that “China appears to be undeterred by an unpromising business climate [across Africa] and looks to be safely established there.”

In March 2010, this dialogue between the two countries [continued](#), as the Ambassador of the Central African Republic to China, spoke highly of the Chinese president, while also saying that “China’s aid to Africa is trustworthy, practical [and] efficient” and lauded the “brilliant achievements” of the ruling Chinese ‘Communist’ Party, at the time. In May 2011, Bozize [visited China again](#), saying that he was grateful for the “sincere and friendly assistance to the construction of the Central African Republic” from China, and hoped for future cooperation. After this meeting, Bozize and other high ranking officials from both countries at the meeting, signed an “economic and technological cooperation agreement.” By September 2012, the Chinese premier was calling for [closer relations](#) with Central Africa. An article [on Global Voices](#), published in December 2012, brings the subject a bit closer to the present: “in recent months the licensing of oil exploration has been underway” with two contracts going to a South African company and one to a Chinese company while on December 27th, 2012, Bozize would suggest that “he was being attacked because he decided to grant oil exploration contracts to a Chinese company.”

Despite military support from fellow African countries, rebels occupied the capital city of the Central African Republic in March 2013, and Bozize fled to the Democratic Republic of Congo and later to France, resulting in the ascension of Michel Djotodia as the president of the country in a three-year transitional government which [has promised to review](#) the resource contracts. This, on top of the increased instability in East Africa which [could be harming](#) Chinese investments, was not good news for the Chinese, even though they remain the biggest export partner of the Central African Republic. In addition, South Sudan or even north Sudan could become less stable due to refugees fleeing, which is important because China is the top export partner of Sudanese oil, according to [the EIA](#). At the same time, China still has a chance to expand in the country, since 2012 data shows that it does not have [a “documented presence”](#) in the country and Chinese companies are ok with operating in bad conditions.

This is precisely why China would support an intervention: to create a better business climate to increase investments of Chinese companies.

This brings one to the next player and member of the UN Security Council, like China, the UK, US, and France. The Russian Federation has an embassy and consulate in the Central African Republic, while the same country has an embassy in Russia. On November 1st, 2013, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs [said](#) that it was “seriously concerned about the activities of the anti-government coalition of Seleka rebels which resulted in the deterioration of [the] situation in the Central African Republic” and called for peaceful negotiations between the warring groups, and the government. On All Africa, [an article](#)

[noted](#) something important in Russian relations toward the African continent, that while the country's current "presence now pales when compared to its competitors," in recent years, "increasing bilateral exchanges...suggest...that Russia-Africa relations are on the brink of revival." South Africa, like China, and the US, is one of Russia's major trading partners in the region, with enough connections that both countries want to supposedly create an [OPEC-style "platinum cartel"](#) to monopolize the sales of platinum worldwide.

Also, like China, Russia has [brought troops to Africa](#): 200 peacekeepers specifically to Chad and the Central African Republic "in support of a UN mission in the region" in 2008. This isn't all. Russia has a [growing amount](#) of arms sales to Africa, along with increased military and technical cooperation in Africa including training officers, giving military equipment, and [much more](#), since since it is one of the biggest arms exporters in the world. Arms and weaponry aren't all, but there is an element of economic involvement as well. The most recent data I could find was [a report](#) describing trade between Africa and Russia "at a glance" with data from late 2011. While the exact data is probably outdated as of now, the report makes a point that "renewed interest" by the Russians has not only included "recent visits by several African leaders to Russia and by Russian leaders to the continent," but it includes investments in dirty energy such as natural gas and oil, mineral mining, nuclear power, hydropower, and more across the continent [12]

The last country that should be discussed is the up-and-rising country of India. While this country is not a member of the UN Security Council, but may become a member in the future, it has an embassy in the Central African Republic as well. The Prime Minister of the country, like the Russian government, was [distressed with disturbances](#) in the country, specifically the killings. Additionally, it is the third biggest export partner of Sudanese oil, with Japan being the second biggest, which is important because the Sudans could be negatively affected by events in the Central African Republic, especially South Sudan. In some respects, even India and France had a relationship, as [The Hindu reported](#) that there is a commitment from India to France, promising to shortlist "its companies...for lucrative defence and civil nuclear energy contracts." The country is seeming to expand into Africa [more and more](#), than it had in the past. Other than the \$29.5 million line of credit the public Export-Import Bank of India, India's government [enjoys "friendly relations"](#) with the Central African Republic, along with a number of agreements between the two countries, "foreign office consultation" on issues such as expanding "trade, investment, and technical cooperation between the countries," and a total \$89.9 million in projects and investments in the mining of limestone, construction of a cement factory, hydroelectric projects, and sending 100 buses, along with the materials for repair and to build new buses. This is all despite the fact that there is a small community of Indian workers in the country and a small amount of trade between the two countries.

In conclusion, the involvement of China, Russia and India in the African continent and the Central African Republic is important despite the fact that they didn't send military forces to assist the African or French forces.

What can you do about all of this?

Unlike Mali, there have already been protests against the war, from the beginning. Already, there have been protests in the Central African Republic, with those in a crowd who were calling out Chad's presence in the country since it has backed the rebel groups in the past, [being fired on](#) by Chadian peacekeepers on December 24th. Pictures of protests that same day against the clearly French imperialist intervention near where the soldiers were

stationed were posted by Abayomi Azikiwe, editor of Pan-African News Wire. [13] A number of other news outlets reported this as well, but characterized the protesters in a negative light as “[supporters of the largely Muslim Seleka rebels](#),” by the government-owned France 24 or as “[Muslims](#)” by the Associated Press, neither of which actually interviewed any of the protesters. The first article, which seemed very pro-intervention, described people chanting “No to colonisation! No to the Sangaris operation!” or “We don’t want religious conflict in our country” said by another protester.

The Associated Press did a better job of describing the protest, while including pictures, saying that most of the marchers were young and male “demand[ed] the departure of French troops” from the country, with some signs saying “We say No to France!” and others “Hollande = Liar” with some even having a “hand drawn map of this nation...split into two, with a Muslim homeland penciled in in the country’s north,” all the while the French are trying to put out propaganda to justify the war. The previous day, an article actually quoted some of those who were angry and protesting, who were [attacked by French forces](#) with tear gas, and protesters blocked roads with “rocks, metal barrels and pieces of wood” while chanting “‘Not to France’ and ‘Hollande is a criminal’” and raising signs that read “French crimes against the Central African Republic” among other messages, with one yelling that the French war in the country “is a murderous operation [since] they [the French] want to divide us Central Africans...to impose their will and make us kill each other. These protesters are not alone. An article in the Epoch Times [profiled the views of some Africans](#) on the war, with some knowing it wouldn’t bring peace, others opposing the intervention as not enough, which some had either “great doubt” in the intervention or weren’t reassured by it.

There are others who have already showed their resistance in numerous different countries. The French public has already gone weary to the intervention. A poll [on December 15th](#) showed that a majority of French citizens were “growingly opposed...to...[the] military intervention in the Central African Republic” which is very different than what happened with Mali. A poll almost a month later on January 5th showed even [lower public support](#) for the military intervention. There may be protests in the country, but I couldn’t find evidence of any. Few French have spoken out, with those opposing it including a small French group of radicals that believes in anti-capitalism, democratic socialism, eco-socialism and alter-globalization, called Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste or New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA), stating [their case against the intervention](#): “François Hollande is therefore to engage the French army in its second operation in Africa in a year...clinging to his policing role, French imperialism, far from helping to solve problems, only exacerbates poverty and underdevelopment...Large companies [have]...plunder[ed] the wealth of the former colonies for decades...French imperialism is the problem, not the solution!” They even have [a whole page](#) on their website in which they have fliers opposing the war, and other critiques as the war goes along. They have also, along with another radical group, Worker’s Struggle, called for the [French withdrawal of troops from Mali](#). Also in France, writer and freelance journalist Michel Collon, wrote that the intervention is not about humanitarianism but rather about resources and protecting the interests of multinational French corporations operating in the country, which is a [deeply stinging critique](#).

In the US, a group that is made up of true communists, called Workers Power, and they oppose the intervention as well. In a statement titled ‘[Why communists oppose French military intervention in Central African Republic](#)’ they write that politicians are being deceptive when they say there is a coming genocide, continuing and writing that “France has been directly or indirectly involved in the assassination or overthrow of every single

leader of the CAR since it first gained autonomy...There has never been a constitutional transfer of power,” and says that France wants “to install a government dependent on French military protection in return for the right to develop and monopolize the extraction of CAR’s reserves of diamonds, uranium, and other raw materials.” Then, on what Allison Kilenny, a co-host of Citizen Radio, jokingly calls the ‘People’s Republic of the Internet,’ there was a video [by Vin0nymous](#), part of the Anonymous collective, that includes a declaration that an operation would not be needed along with no “taking down/defacement of government websites,” saying that humanitarian supplies that are all that’s necessary, while also stating that they fear that “French troops and possible US military soldiers” in the country are “not here to make way for a hopeful path for the people in the Republic. They are there for the sake of oil, minerals and other resources the country is rich on” and repeating Anonymous’s stand against those who have committed heinous acts against the people of the country. Similar messages were spread in the [Anonymous ‘twitterstorm’](#) about the country on January 5th.

These actions of resistance are laudable, but as I said about the war in Mali, more is needed. There needs to be protests in France, the US, the UK, and as many countries in the world in solidarity with those already protesting in the Central African Republic. Pushing the antiwar groups into action and alternative parties to show their opposition is important. While those who made the video I mentioned earlier may disagree, I think it would be wise to engage in an Anonymous operation about the Central African Republic, specifically targeting the French military, AFRICOM, and that of the UN mission, among other targets as an act of electronic civil disobedience in solidarity. Such protest actions, among others including direct action, civil disobedience, and so on are needed. Connecting with anti-imperialists would be key, as to build a bigger movement, tied to opposition of other wars as well. Just to be clear, I am not trying to tell people what actions they can take, but rather making suggestions. In the end, there must be a push to make sure Africa is for Africans, a push to a world where no nations or states, even the US and its allies, “covet the land or resources of other nations” [14] along with multinational corporations, while also rejecting the idea, as Martin Luther King, Jr. put it, that “God chose America as his divine, messianic force to be a sort of policeman of the whole world.” [15]

NOTES

[1] West, Cornel. *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism*. 2004. Penguin Books. pp. 59

[2] *Webster’s Concise World Atlas* published in 1991, pp. 123. This is also noted by USAID, on their page [about the Central African Republic](#) as well: “The Central African Republic is one of the world’s least-developed countries, with over 60 percent of its population living in poverty. The country does have some important natural resources, with timber and diamonds dominating exports. However, transportation and electricity infrastructure is extremely limited.”

[3] *The 21st Century World Atlas*. Trident Press International. Italy. 2000. This book has bias because it gets funding from big international funders, statisticians and others. This quote is from page 282. To be specific, at the time of the writing of this book, 30% of the population was unemployed. The CIA World Factbook also [confirms this](#): “Subsistence agriculture, together with forestry and mining, remains the backbone of the economy of the Central African Republic (CAR), with about 60% of the population living in outlying areas. The agricultural sector generates more than half of GDP. Timber and diamonds account for most export earnings, followed by cotton.”

[4] Black, Jeremy. *World History Atlas: Mapping the Human Journey: fully revised and updated*. Doring Kindersley. 2005, London. pp. 96-99, 102-3, 106-7 and 169.

[5] See Roosevelt's tweets [here](#) and [here](#)

[6] Importantly, Areva also has a hand in military technology like designing the nuclear reactors, which serve as a power source for the Barracuda submarines used by the French, while it has operations in the United States, Niger, Canada, South Korea, China, India and Kazakhstan.

[7] There was a plan to privatize Areva and sell off its government shares, but this [was shelved in 2005](#). Currently the French state owns 90% of the corporation.

[8] There are a number of articles detailing this. Some note the accusations, which are seemingly correct, that French government gave accepted bribes from African dictators which one can find in an article by [Business Insider](#), [Al Arabiya](#), and [Pambuzuka](#). Others talk about the French government propping up African Dictators including articles in [Foreign Policy](#) magazine, [AllAfrica](#), [The Perspective](#), [IPS News](#), and [Al-Jazeera](#).

[9] West, Cornel. *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism*. 2004. Penguin Books. pp. 7

[10] As noted by the most recent [Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad 1798-2013](#) and the most recent declaration of the use of armed forces [by President Obama](#). Here are the statistics broken down for those who are interested: from 1798-1950, there were only seven separate uses of US armed forces in Africa which were very sporadic; from 1950-1980, US armed forces were only used twice; from 1981 to 1988 US armed forces were only used six times; from 1989-1992 they were only used four times; from 1993-2000 they were used nine times, from 2001-2008 they were used four times, which incorporates repeated usage, and from 2009 to present there have been over twelve uses of armed forces.

[11] While some say 2006, which may be accurate as well, but this refers to powerful country-to-country involvement and this was only the information I could find

[12] The report describes investments by Russian corporations in South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Angola, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Algeria, DRC, and Egypt. I am not sure how the current countries Russians are operating in differs from this list, but that could be a good future investigation if someone else wants to pursue it.

[13] The pictures were posted on Azikwe's flickr, showing [a march](#), protesters being [guided back](#) by French soldiers, [the aftermath](#) of the Chadian peacekeepers opening fire on a crowd, and part of a crowd of other protesters with a poster advocating [against France's intervention](#).

[14] This is a reference to a section of Obama's speech at the UN, in which he said "Ultimately, this is the international community that America seeks: one where nations do not covet the land or resources of other nations, but one in which we carry out the founding purpose of this institution and where we all take responsibility." In this case, I want to use these words against the US and its allies, since there was a hidden caveat to exempt the US and its allies from this declaration, while also rejecting the seemingly imperialist tone of the 'world policeman' that Obama projects.

[15] The full text of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speech in 1967 titled '[Why I Am Opposed to the War in Vietnam](#)'

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