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Africa/France

# A far-right Françafrique

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**The Rassemblement National's interest in Africa may be limited, but the few positions it has taken shed light on its positioning and strategy towards the continent. There are two discourses. One is directed at Africa, with condemnations of Françafrique and the CFA franc. [1]** This allows a relative porosity between the far right and certain African political forces. The other is aimed at its own electorate. The African continent is presented as a reservoir for immigration and as a threat from Islamist terrorism.

## Pandering

Marine Le Pen relies on a network that has been present in Africa for a long time. Far-right militants were fierce supporters of colonialism, fighting to the bitter end against Algerian independence with the OAS. Some were recycled by Foccart and ended up in the Congo alongside the colonialists who tried to create a state in the mining province of Katanga. François Duprat is one of them. A theorist of revolutionary nationalism and notorious anti-Semite, he was one of the advisers to Moïse Tshombé, puppet president of independent Katanga from 1960 to 1963. Subsequently, Duprat was for many years a member of the political bureau of the Front National (FN) and close to Jean-Marie Le Pen.

Mercenary Bob Denard recruited from the ranks of far-right militants to create a sort of French Wagner. They overthrew the government of the Comoros and established a reign of terror. Some of these mercenaries made up the Département Protection Sécurité (DPS), the FN's security service.

## Jean-Marie Le Pen's trips to Africa

Although in 2015 Jean-Marie Le Pen, then an FN member of the European Parliament, and his daughter, then FN president, declared that apartheid 'was initially a desire to promote the two communities. We can judge this more or less harshly, but we cannot betray the thinking of those who developed it'. [2] This did not prevent him from meeting some of the pillars of Françafrique.

Le Pen used the presence of former OAS members in Africa to meet African presidents. In 1987, he went to Gabon to greet Omar Bongo. Later, his wife Jany Le Pen visited the First Lady of Cameroon, Chantal Biya, who underlined the convergences of views with the far-right movement. In 2016, Le Pen was invited to the presidential investiture of the dictator of Equatorial Guinea, Teodoro Obiang Nguema, elected after a grossly rigged poll with a score of 93.7%.

With these trips, the far right is gaining credibility and strengthening its base. The other advantage would be financial. Robert Bourgi's testimony refers to funding by Omar Bongo, corroborated by the former Gabonese Prime Minister Jean Eyeghe Ndong, who recounts the words of the President of Gabon: 'This gentleman, although he is a racist, still received the kindness of suitcases of money from me'. [3]

## Marine following in her father's footsteps

Marine Le Pen's trips to Africa have reinforced her international stature. To achieve this, she is benefiting from her father's network, which she is trying to expand. Lawyer Marcel Ceccaldi, who defended Gaddafi's son, enabled her to meet Chadian dictator Idriss Déby senior and give a speech at the country's National Assembly.

Her trip to Dakar, where she met Macky Sall in the midst of an authoritarian drift, owes much to the work of Philippe Bohn, who has held senior positions in major French companies. A close associate of the Republicans, he is now working for the Rassemblement National.

She can also rely on Gilbert Collard, also a lawyer, who had joined Reconquête. He defended the leaders of the Arche de Zoé association, who tried to kidnap several dozen children in Chad for adoption by French families.

## One message for Africa...

The relations she has forged with past and present African potentates in no way prevent Marine Le Pen from playing the role of defender of Françafrique and the sovereignty of African countries, based on an ethno-differentialist ideology. This idea, developed by the New Right, is that each territory should be dedicated to one ethnic group, thus avoiding any mixing. This ideology is common to all rightist identity-based politics. It meets with the approval of certain 'patriotic' movements existing in West Africa or 'neo-Panafricanists', most of whom are in the pay of Putin.

## ...Another for the electorate

As for the discourse in France, the Rassemblement National's African policy is approached primarily through the prism of immigration. Countries refusing to admit 'undesirable nationals' expelled from France would be penalised. Visas, money transfers and development aid would be abolished. The latter would in any case be reduced and should only benefit French companies. Marine Le Pen is obviously opposed to 'repentance speeches', as she defends the positive aspects of colonisation.

The policy of the Rassemblement National boils down to finding allies in Africa and discriminating against Africans in France.

PS:

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[1] The term "Françafrique" is used to refer to France's sphere of influence in former French and Belgian colonies in sub-Saharan Africa. The CFA franc refers to two currencies, the West African CFA franc, used in eight West African countries, and the Central African CFA franc, used in six Central African countries.

[2] Pour Jean-Marie Le Pen, l'apartheid était «au départ une volonté de promotion des deux communautés» – Libération (liberation.fr)

[3] Un dirigeant africain évoque des valises pour Le Pen (lejdd.fr)