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Mali-France

Breakdown of relations between Mali and France

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In recent weeks, Mali has taken two important steps: leaving the [G5 Sahel](#) and renouncing its defence agreements with France. These decisions come at a time when the influence of Paris is declining in its African fiefdom, a consequence in particular of its inability to defeat the jihadists in the region.

Mali's choice to leave the G5 Sahel military alliance of Mauritania, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad is motivated by the refusal to grant it the rotating presidency that rightfully belonged to it. Beyond the symbol that undermines the unity of the Sahelian states, this departure should not have many consequences on the military apparatus. Created in 2014, this structure has struggled to emerge due to lack of funding. Although it has been operative since 2017, it has never managed to play a leading role compared to the UN mission of MINUSMA or the French operation Barkhane. Experts describe the functioning of this alliance as a juxtaposition of bilateral military cooperation on the borders of different countries.

The other decision concerns the renunciation of three texts governing the presence of military forces, French within the framework of Barkhane, and European with Takuba. For the transitional authorities, this rupture is with immediate effect while the Quai d'Orsay intends to take its time for the total evacuation of its troops. These differences in timing could lead to incidents or conflicts.

Imperialism losing momentum

This rupture is taking place in the context of a weakening of France in Africa, as shown by the series of demonstrations against the policies of Paris. In Burkina Faso and then in Niger against the passage of the Barkhane convoy, which caused the death of three people, without any serious investigation having been carried out. In Dakar, demonstrations against the indictment of the main oppositionist Omar Sonko led to the ransacking of French brand shops. Just recently a similar scenario occurred in N'Djamena, Chad.

The decline of Paris is perceptible at all levels. Its diplomatic blunder pushed the Central African Republic into the arms of the Russians who did not ask for so much. We also see the decline in its economic influence and its inability to score significant points in the Sahel conflict. In other words, the jihadists are winning the war. This conflict, located in northern Mali at the beginning of 2012, has spread over a large part of the Sahel and is now reaching the coastal countries of West Africa such as Benin, Côte d'Ivoire or Togo.

Former French president Hollande, by recklessly declaring that Operation Serval would eradicate terrorism, not only gave false hope to the people but above all suggested that this problem could be dealt with militarily without dealing with the political, economic and social aspects that feed the conflict.

If the justified recriminations of the African peoples against the policy of France were well perceived by the diplomatic services, the responses of the French Foreign Office were not up to the task. The few cosmetic measures announced at the Africa-France summit in Montpellier did not have the desired effect.

Lost or persisting illusions

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The political situation in Mali is very unstable. The country's authorities have just announced that they have foiled a coup, the fourth since the junta took power. At the same time discordant voices are being hunted down and imprisoned. Omar Mariko, the leader of the African Solidarity for Democracy and Independence (Sadi) party, is in the crosshairs. However, it is difficult for the putschists to pass him off as an agent of the France when his organization was the only one to express strong reservations about the French intervention in Mali.

The putschists did not liberate the country, they simply changed masters. From now on it is Russian imperialism that dictates its law. The more isolated the country, the easier it will be for the mercenaries of the Wagner company to continue their abuses against civilians and plunder the country.

The first decade of the century was the peak of the craze for the idea that China would save and develop the continent, while in the 2010s Obama was looked to, on the grounds of his Kenyan origins. Today the portrait of Putin is brandished in the role of saviour. In this enumeration, there is no irony or judgment but a simple observation of the consequences of the cruel absence, for the peoples, of a real political and social alternative.

Translated by [International Viewpoint](#) from *l'Anticapitaliste*.

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