On September 22, Mali celebrated its national holiday, Independence Day. In Bamako and other prominent localities, the inhabitants held festivities and rejoiced over the final liberation from the oppression of the Fifth Republic. Notably, on the same day, thousands of people held a large-scale anti-French rally in the capital, where Kémi Séba, Pan-Africanist political leader, also spoke.

Through the example of Mali’s Independence Day celebrations, one can trace the change in the inhabitants’ attitude towards the predatory foreign policy of the Fifth Republic and the Western neo-colonialists in general. There was a marked deterioration in Malians’ attitudes towards France earlier this year, following the now widely publicized guilt of French troops in the “bloody wedding” in Bounti, when a French warplane attacked more than 100 people in Mali on January 3 this year who were attending a wedding event.

According to the UN report released in March 2021 on this incident, 19 civilians were killed, as well as three armed men. The French government first reported that its military had killed up to 30 militants near the Bounti village on
January 7. Human Rights Watch questioned the truthfulness of the officials' statements and called for an investigation. As a result, more than 400 people were interviewed by the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). One hundred and fifteen of them gave face-to-face, non-anonymous testimony. It turned out that there was a wedding at the site of the attack on January 3. There were about 100 people in attendance. Only men were among the dead (consistent with local customs). Their ages ranged from 23 to 71. Whether or not the unarmed dead were affiliated with extremists can be judged and speculated, but there is no definite answer from the UN. The organization believes that the French military is guilty of killing at least 19 civilians, and the airstrike was totally unjustified. This tragedy undermined confidence in the veracity of the reports of the French armed forces stationed in the Sahel region. It reinforced Malians' already existing resentment against the presence of foreign troops on their soil.

In addition, criticism of the openly French-oriented government in Mali has intensified in recent years. Society's demand for improvement of the quality of life, formation of a clear national agenda, creation of a strong state in all respects, as well as the return of peace and stability to the region entailed the Black Continent turning to partners that do not have a colonial past and are ready for a close, mutually beneficial cooperation, in particular, to Russia. The inhabitants of this African country explain their departure from the "trusteeship of France" saying that even after Mali had gained independence from French colonial rule, the French robbed and destabilized the African state for decades. As a result, this state, which has significant uranium reserves and other expensive natural minerals, has remained a poor state for many decades.

France has long been present in the region, but because of the uranium deposits and its desire to control the French-speaking territories, it does not want to leave it. With the development of the nuclear industry, the Fifth Republic has taken a leading position among European countries in this area. The construction of many nuclear power plants allowed Paris to reduce the price of electricity for domestic users and export the surplus to foreign countries.

Even in the last century, the former metropolis drew attention to the wealth of Africa and proceeded to appropriate it, which has not always taken place in the legal field. One of the most lucrative industries is the smuggling of radioactive substances and refractory metals, the demand for which increases every year because of the substantial growth in consumption. By 2021, not without the participation of France, Africans have created a network of illegal mining of radioactive substances as large as the web of drug trafficking. It was Mali that was given special preference in this illicit business, considering that, according to French experts, the republic is one of the most promising countries for uranium prospecting in the entire continent. Having shown a particular interest in the resources of Mali, France has organized an entire "anti-terrorist operation" to facilitate their exploitation. For example, between 2013 and 2014, the French military conducted Operation Serval in Mali against Tuareg rebels and Islamist groups in the north of the country. In 2014, Operation Barkhane was the follow-up to Serval.

The Falea primary uranium deposit in Mali is located 350 kilometers to the west of Bamako, the capital of the Republic, and it was discovered in 1977 by employees of French COGEMA. In 2016, the development rights were purchased by Canadian GoviEX, which is currently continuing to conduct exploration of the area and technical preparation for production. Significant deposits of copper and silver have also been found in the area.

However, French involvement in the illegal business with radioactive metals, without the necessary international control, may one day end in a global catastrophe. And ignoring the consequences that unchecked thirst for money causes, will cost not only France but the whole world.

But Paris's interest in Mali is not limited to that. Paris exports quite a bit of military equipment to Mali. At the same time, central authorities in Mali and other countries of G5 Sahel have remained weak in recent years, and the influence of jihadists due to ethnoreligious conflicts has been strong. But this very situation was a good motivation for foreign troops being deployed here, particularly a large contingent of French soldiers.

While Bamako used to try to demonstrate formal free status while at the same time being under the de facto rule of pro-Parisian politicians, the situation has now changed dramatically. Having witnessed the blatantly neo-colonial approach of Paris in shaping relations with Bamako over the past 60 years, the inhabitants were tired of tolerating France's brutal ways of governance. They decided to pursue their national interests on their own. Mass protests against the pro-French policies of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta and demands to take adequate measures against the economic crisis and insecurity in the country have started since June 5, 2020.
The military responded to these sentiments and demands of Malian society for an improved quality of life by forming a core of Malian military servants at the Kati base 15 kilometers north of Bamako who were dissatisfied with the decisions taken by the country's authorities. The military, tired of tolerating French proxies, decided to stand up for national interests on its own and chose to carry out bloodless reshuffles, removing leaders who had sold out to "outside sponsors" as peacefully as possible. On August 18, national army fighters arrested the Head of State and the Prime Minister, the leaders of the General Staff and the National Guard for that reason. The movement was led by young 37-year-old Colonel Assimi Goïta, who took power from French protégé Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, promising that elections would be held on February 27, 2022. It is noteworthy that Assimi Goïta had military courses in the US, Germany, and France, but he did not speak highly of the West. This made Paris nervous, as its cooperation with the new authorities was questionable.

Currently, Mali is pursuing an independent policy, and the nationally oriented government is trying, by all means, to demonstrate the population that it is endeavoring to establish an African state that is prosperous in every sense. The younger generation of natives does not need Western "guardianship" mainly focused on unilateral cooperation. They are choosing their own path, and not taking into account the interests of the Fifth Republic, which has not cared about people's needs for decades. Looking at the many failures of the Elysée Palace, they are constructing their own policy of peace and understanding.

The withdrawal of Mali from French custody was confirmed by Prime Minister of Mali Choguel Kokalla Maïga at the UN General Assembly. He pointed out that the Malian authorities have turned to the Russian PMC (Private Military Company) for help. That's because the French troops intend to leave the country, which is at war with terrorism. The above step was taken very critically in Paris. From a frankly neo-colonialist position, Paris has tried to threaten Moscow and Bamako if Russian PMCs were deployed in the African Republic of Mali. This, in particular, was stated by Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Yves Le Drian at a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on September 24.

But whatever such threats Paris makes to maintain the illusion of control over the situation, the final word rests with Africa's younger generation, which is free to choose allies with whom to cooperate on an equal and mutually beneficial basis. And most importantly, they have every right to decide for themselves which path to follow in the interests of their country.

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