CAR is Fighting against Both the Domestic and Foreign Enemies

For four centuries African nations suffered from the evils of the slave trade, until, in the mid-19th Century Europeans discontinued this commerce, no longer seeing it as profitable. But the decline of the slave trade saw the dawn of another terrible time for Africa - the colonial period. African warriors were unable to resist attacks by European armies equipped with the latest weaponry. The colonists benefitted from internal African rivalries, sowing the seeds of ethnic and tribal warfare in order to gain control, step by step, over the continent.

By the beginning of the 20th Century the Western nations had completed their conquest of Africa. It was Britain who succeeded in occupying the largest area - the whole eastern half of the continent from Cape Town in the south to Cairo in the north - excluding only the German colonies in East Africa. Britain’s African colonies had a total population of 58 million people.

After Britain, the second largest colonial power was France. The French colonies extended from the Mediterranean coast to the Gulf of Guine in the west and Lake Chad in the east. The French controlled territories were home to 27 million Africans.

Other parts of Africa were controlled by Belgium, Portugal, Germany, Italy and Spain.
During the colonial period, when Africa was carved up between competing powers, millions of Africans died from conflict, famine and disease. Thousands of villages and towns were burned or demolished. Agriculture declined, with huge falls in the number of livestock and the area of land being farmed. For many years, development in Africa stood at a standstill. The Africans suffered immensely from the imperial system, with colonialists ruthlessly plundering the territories under their control.

In the mid-20th Century the African nations were able to throw off the colonial yoke, but nevertheless the continent has still not been able to entirely rid itself of its former masters. Unwilling to lose access to these sources of wealth, the Western nations have continued to dictate terms to politicians in the post-independence African states, maintaining a hold over their former colonies, inciting ethnic and national conflicts and making use of different militant groups to achieve their goals. To observe these processes, we need only look at the activities of the former colonial powers, especially France, in Africa today.

Here, it is worth remembering something that Jacques Chirac, the President of France, said back in 2008: "... a great deal of the money we have in our wallet has come directly from exploiting Africa over the centuries."

The French government is still openly seeking to limit the sovereignty of African nations by exerting a direct influence on their internal affairs and budgets by means of the CFA franc (Franc of the Financial Community of Africa), a currency which was introduced by Paris. Now citizens in many of the continent’s Francophone countries are opposing this French “embrace”. And a year ago the leading French political magazine Le Monde diplomatique was forced to admit that criticism of France was widespread, and on the increase, in her former colonies. It noted that, sixty years after Mali became independent, the voices of protest were growing louder, with demonstrators shouting “France, go home!” and calling for Mali to stop using the CFA franc and for an end to France’s Barkhane military operation, which has been under way since 2013.

And now the feelings are getting stronger day by day. In the last few days, even the French media have been reporting on the demonstrations against the French military presence in Burkina-Faso. And in Mali both citizens and local officials have been outspoken in their opposition to France’s attempt to dictate the course taken by the country.

And criticism of France’s policies is also growing in the Central African Republic. Blaise-Didacien Kossimatchi, the coordinator of Talitha Koum, a public movement based in the CAR, has accused France of looting his country’s national resources. As he reminds his compatriots, it was the French who did great damage to the country’s wildlife, hunting large numbers of rare animals in order to sell ivory and skins on the black market, and who looted priceless jewels and works of African art.

In Bangui, several dozen residents took part in a flash mob outside the French embassy. The demonstrators accuse the French 5th Republic (1958-present) of having financed Nigerian mercenaries and militants from the Union for Peace in CAR (UPC), who have launched attacks on civilians and the army. Citizens in the CAR have called on France to stop supporting the radicals and to allow the extradition of their leader so he can be tried. In the CAR the general opinion is that the French government will not willingly take any steps to prevent the attacks, but will, on the contrary, do all it can to keep the country within its sphere of influence.

At the end of August representatives of the Sentry, an NGO that monitors the illegal financing of military operations in conflict zones, published a report on the “private empire” of the Castel Group, one of France’s oldest winemaking dynasties, which has over 240 branches in 50 countries. According to the Sentry’s findings, in 2014 SUCAF RCA, Castel’s representative office in the CAR, along with its Paris-based subsidiary SOMDIAA, is involved in financing anti-government militants from the UPC, led by Ali Darassa. The management of SUCAF RCA reached an arrangement with the radicals to approve the persons on duty at checkpoints in advance in order to ensure the company’s trucks could pass unhindered. But that is not all: the Castel Group’s subsidiary also had its maintenance staff service the militants’ vehicles and provide them with petrol. And the Group’s involvement in these activities is unsurprising, given the fanatically neo-colonial views of its founder, the 94-year old Pierre Castel. In 2003 he helped François Bozizé, former president of the CAR, to mount a coup, and after the Bozizé government was toppled, 10 year later, he recruited militants in an attempt to protect his business interests. It was François Bozizé who brought together a number of rebel groups in the region, including the UPC, to form the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC), which attempted to disrupt the December 2020 general election.

The CAR’s government and people alike are convinced that the arms embargo on their country, initiated by France, represents a great danger for the nation. Approximately 90% of the militant groups are formed of foreign mercenaries, who regularly attack non-combatant villages and kill innocent civilians. The staff of public organizations in the CAR see this as a clear sign that France is trying to undermine their government. The former
colonial power aims, quite illegally, to gain control of the CAR’s considerable natural resources by destabilizing the country. According to a commentator from Radio Lengo Songo, France is behind most of the woes afflicting the people of the Central African Republic.

It was recently reported that the French President, Emanuel Macron, had spoken to Mahamat Déby (son of the late President of Chad, Idriss Déby, who was killed earlier this year) and offered to provide financing and modern weaponry to militants in order to overthrow of the CAR’s legitimate government. This conversation was reported by the on-line newspaper Ndjoni Sango, which cited diplomatic sources. According to the newspaper, after the unsuccessful coup attempt in December 2020 several large divisions of militants from the CPC took refuge in Chad, where the CPC’s leader, former President François Bozizé, is also in hiding.

Ndjoni Sango also reported that Baba Laddé, the new head of Chad’s Intelligence Agency, has had a meeting with Ali Darassa, the fugitive leader of the UPC. According to CAR media sources “both these war criminals are responsible for carrying out atrocities in the Central African Republic, and they want to join forces again in order to organize a coup in the country.” They also report that Chad is currently recruiting mercenaries and placing troops along its border with the Central African Republic, and that the militants are being trained by French soldiers. Many observers believe that France is counting on the mercenaries to mount an invasion of the Central African Republic so that it can illegally seize the country’s mineral resources and then regain its former influence in the country. Once it has, with the help of the mercenaries, achieved its goals, the French government will seek to further destabilize the CAR, and also Mali and other countries in the region, which will have the effect of igniting more conflicts and increasing the risk of terrorism in Africa.

Nevertheless, the government of the CAR is trying to bring to an end the many armed conflicts that have afflicted the country for the last few years. The CAR’s army, the Central African Armed Forces (FACA) has returned 98% of the country to government control. As the CAR’s government emphasizes, they achieved this with the help of allied forces from Russia and Rwanda.

Nevertheless, as reported by Nouvelles Plus, France and a number of other western governments are organizing press and social media campaigns to discredit and denigrate the CAR’s government and its actions. As part of a sponsored campaign these media outlets are directing unfounded accusations at Bangui’s partners and insulting senior government figures in the CAR, thus demonstrating their determination to stand in the way of the restoration of peace and stability in the country.

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