Analysis -The US And The Wars In The Sahel

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United States and Africa

Washington has been at war in Africa for years. But in French-speaking parts of the continent it is Paris that is fully in control. Who becomes president and how national affairs are conducted is a matter determined by the French for their own interest under the colonial-era doctrine of *Françafrique*. And American tax-payers foot much of the bill for this neo-colonialism.

At the end of his first week in office, newly elected President Emmanuel Macron visited French troops in the West African country of Mali. Macron flew into Gao, a city in Mali's north, where political unrest and ethnic strife have raged for more than five years. He met some of the 1,600 French soldiers stationed there, at the largest French military base outside of France. The French had intervened in its former colony in January 2013 in an effort to drive out al-Qaeda-linked groups which had taken

advantage of the unrest and conflict created by a rebellion of the ethnic Tuaregs in 2012 to try to take control of the central government in Bamako, Mali's capital. This rebellion spread throughout the Sahel; an ecoclimatic and biogeographic zone of transition in Africa between the Sahara to the north and the Sudanian Savanna to the south covering more than 3.053 million km².

Before one can explain the role played by the U.S. in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel it is important to understand the continuing role of the French Government and army in the region. France established military bases in Africa during the colonial period and maintained a military presence in Africa after the 'flag independence' of its former colonies in the 1960s. The independence struggle of French Africa resulted, with the exception of Guinea, in the notional independence of the African states, each with a flag, a national anthem, a football team, and a continuing dependence on France under the terms of a Colonial Pact. The terms of this pact were agreed at the time of independence as a condition of the de-colonialization of the African states.

The Colonial Pact Agreement enshrined a number of special preferences for France in the political, commercial and defence processes in the African countries. On defence, it agreed two types of continuing contact. The first was the agreement on military co-operation or Technical Military Aid (AMT) agreements. These covered education, training of soldiers and officers of African security forces. The second type, secret and binding, were defence agreements supervised and implemented by the French Ministry of Defence, which served as a legal basis for French interventions within the African states by French military forces. These agreements allowed France to have pre-deployed troops and police in bases across Africa; in other words, French army and gendarme units present permanently

and by rotation in bases and military facilities in Africa, run entirely by the French. The Colonial Pact was much more than an agreement to station soldiers across Africa. It bound the economies of Africa to the control of France. It made the CFA franc the national currency in both former colonial regions of Africa and created a continuing, and enforceable, dependency on France.

In summary, the colonial pact maintained the French control over the economies of the African states:

- it took possession of their foreign currency reserves;
- it controlled the strategic raw materials of the country;
- it stationed troops in the country with the right of free passage;
- it demanded that all military equipment be acquired from France;
- it took over the training of the police and army;
- it required that French businesses be allowed to maintain monopoly enterprises in key areas (water, electricity, ports, transport, energy, etc.).
- it required that in the award of government contracts in the African countries, French companies should be considered first; only after that could Africans look elsewhere. It didn't matter if Africans could obtain better value for money elsewhere, French companies came first, and most often got the contracts.
- The African states must make a contribution to France each year for the infrastructure created by the French colonial system and left behind when independence was granted.
- France not only set limits on the imports of a range of items from outside the franc zone but also set minimum quantities of imports from France. These treaties are still in force and operational.

The system is known as *Françafrique*. These policies of *Françafrique* were not concocted by the French National

Assembly or the result of any democratic process. They were the result of policies conducted by a small group of people in the French President's office, the 'African Cell', starting with Charles DeGaulle and his African specialist, Jacques Foccart. For the past half-century, the secretive and powerful "African Cell" has overseen France's strategic interests in Africa, holding sway over a wide swath of former French colonies. Acting as a general command, the Cell uses France's military as a hammer to install leaders it deems friendly to French interests and to remove those who pose a danger to the continuation of the system. Sidestepping traditional diplomatic channels, the Cell reports only to one person: the president.

Under Chirac, African policy was run by the president himself. He worked with the "*Cellule Africaine*" composed of African Advisor Michel De Bonnecorse, Aliot-Marie (the Defence Minister) and DGSE chief Pierre Brochand. They were aided by a web of French agents assigned to work undercover in Africa, embedded in French companies like Bouygues, Delmas, Total, and other multinationals; pretending to be expatriate employees.

Under Sarkozy the "*Cellule Africaine*" was run by the president and included Bruno Joubert and an informal adviser and Sarkozy envoy, Robert Bourgi. Claude Guéant, secretary general of the presidency and later interior minister, played an influential role. Hollande's "*Cellule Africaine*" was composed of his trusted friends: Jean-Yves Le Drian (Minister of Defence); the chief of his personal military staff, General Benoît Puga; the African Advisor Hélène Le Gal, and a number of lower-level specialists from the ministries of foreign affairs and the treasury. It isn't clear yet who will make up Macron's African Cell.

What is important about the effects of *Françafrique* on African states is that the French resisted any locally-engendered change in the rules and had troops and gendarmes available in Africa to put down any leader with different ambitions. During the last 50 years, a total of 67 coups happened in 26 countries in Africa; 61% of the coups happened in Francophone Africa. The French began the 'discipline' of African leaders by ordering the assassination of Sylvanus Olympio in Togo in 1963 when he wanted his own currency instead of the CFA franc.

- In June 1962, the first president of Mali, Modiba Keita, decreed that Mali was leaving the CFA zone and abandoning the Colonial Pact. As in Togo the French paid an African ex-Legionnaire to kill the president. In November 1968 Lieutenant Moussa Traore made a coup, killed Modiba Keita, and became President of Mali.
- The French use of African ex-Legionnaires to remove presidents who rebelled against the Colonial Pact, the CFA or *Françafrique* became commonplace. On 1 January, 1966, Jean-Bédel Bokassa, an ex-French foreign legionnaire, carried out a coup against David Dacko, the first President of the Central African Republic.
- On 3 January 1966, Maurice Yaméogo, the first President of the Republic of Upper Volta, now called Burkina Faso, was victim of a coup carried out by Aboubacar Sangoulé Lamizana
- On 26 October 1972, Mathieu Kérékou who was a security guard to President Hubert Maga, the first President of the Republic of Benin, carried out a coup against the president.
- There were several other assassinations managed by the French which took place without the use of Legionnaires. These included:
- Marien Ngouabi, President of the Republic of the Congo, assassinated in 1977.

- In Cameroon, Felix Moumie, who was the successor to previously-assassinated Reuben Um Nyobe, was murdered by thallium poisoning in Geneva on 15 October 1960. His killer was a French agent, William Bechtel, who posed as a journalist to meet Moumie in a restaurant and poisoned his drink.
- François Tombalbaye, President of Chad, was assassinated by soldiers commanded by French Army officers in 1975. Then, in December 1989 the French overthrew the government of Hissan Habre in Chad and installed Idriss Deby as President because Habre wanted to sell Chadian oil to U.S. oil companies.
- Perhaps the most tragic was the assassination of Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso in 1987. Sankara seized power in a popular coup in 1983 in an attempt to break the country's ties to its French colonial power. He was overthrown and assassinated in a coup led by his best friend and childhood companion Blaise Compaoré on French orders.
- In March 2003 French and Chadian troops overthrew the elected government of President Ange-Felix Patasse and installed General François Bozize as President when Patasse announced that he wanted French troops out of the Central African Republic. A few years later the French deposed Bosize as well.
- In 2009, the French supported a coup in Madagascar by Andry Rajoelina against the elected government of Marc Ravalomanana who wanted to open the country to investments by international companies in mining and petroleum and refused to allow Total to unilaterally raise its contracted price for oil by 75%.
- The French used its troops in the Ivory Coast to provoke an attempted overthrow of the democratically-elected government of Gbagbo. When the rebellion to oust Gbagbo failed, the French troops divided the country into two areas and continued to plan coups against Gbagbo. When Gbagbo won the election in 2010, despite French interference, the French troops (and the

UN ‘peacekeepers’) used helicopter gunships to attack the Ivorian citizenry and took over the country in 2011.

French military involvement in Africa

The current problem for France is that it maintains wide engagement of its military in operations outside of metropolitan France. These are very expensive. There are currently 36,000 French troops deployed in foreign territories-such operations are known as “OPEX” for *Opérations Extérieures* (“External Operations”).

Since colonial days France has stationed its troops across Africa in permanent bases. These participate in controlling the internal politics of the African nations of *Francáfrique* as well as their borders.

These included:

- Côte d’Ivoire, where the French troops in *Operation Licorne* and its helicopters recently overthrew the government of Gbagbo and supervised the killing of numerous Ivoirian citizens in collaboration with UN “peacekeepers”.
- Chad, with the *Epervier Mission*. Established in 1986 to help re-establish peace and maintain Chad’s territorial integrity, and establish and protect the government of Deby
- France has been present in Mali since January 2013 in support of the Malian authorities in the fight against terrorist groups. 2,900 men were deployed with the Serval operation.
- Since December 2013, France also has operated in the Central African Republic in support of the MISCA, the African Union peacekeeping operation. 1,600 men are deployed with the Sangaris operation.

France also supports the participation of African soldiers in peacekeeping operations through the Reinforcement of African Peacekeeping Capabilities (RECAMP) program.

Recently the French have concentrated their troop deployments in West Africa to fight the rising threat of Islamic fundamentalism. Around 3,000 soldiers remain in the expansive Sahel area of Africa to check Islamist violence and arms trafficking, with no specified exit date. French forces are organised around four base camps, each with its own focus, and with headquarters based in the Chadian capital of Ndjamena. Their primary aim is not entirely the suppression of fundamentalist forces; their primary aim is to safeguard the French Areva uranium mines in Niger which provide France with it supply of fuel for its nuclear power programs.

This operation is known as *Operation Barkhane* (the name refers to a sickle-shaped sand dune). It is an effort to streamline French military activity in the region and to retain the military power but reduce the costs of duplication of tasks. Following diplomatic agreements with Chad, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Mauritania (the "Sahel G-5"), over 3,000 French troops are involved in securing the Sahel-Sahara region in cooperative operations involving G-5 troops. Other assets deployed in the operation include 20 helicopters, 200 armoured vehicles, 200 trucks, six fighter-jets, ten transport aircraft and three drones
The initiation of *Operation Barkhane* brought to an end four existing French operations in Africa; Licorne (Côte d'Ivoire, 2002-2017), Épervier (Chad, 1986-2014), Sabre (Burkina Faso, 2012-2014) and Serval (Mali, 2013-2014). Licorne is coming to an end in June 2017 (though 450 French troops will remain in Abidjan as part of a logistical base for French operations) while the other operations were folded into *Operation Barkhane*. *Operation Sangaris* (Central African Republic, 2013-present) is classified as a humanitarian rather than

counter-terrorism mission and the deployment of some 2,000 French troops will be reduced to 1,200 French soldiers who will remain in northern Mali. Existing French military deployments in Djibouti, Dakar (Senegal) and Libreville (Gabon) are expected to be scaled back significantly.

France military bases

France's problem in maintaining its military presence in Africa is that it has run out of money. It cannot afford to maintain such a strong military posture in Africa. It has been able to get the assistance of its European Union partners in a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in programs like EURFOR in Chad which notionally confronts the terrorist organisations with European troops, but the funds needed to provide a real challenge to the terrorists are wanting.

The notion of intrinsic forces is important in the evaluation of warfare in the Sahel. These terrorists are not, for the most part, invading foreigners coming to seek domination, power or advantage. They are locals who have taken up the Salafist ideology to further their joint aims of setting up an Islamic State and in preserving the smuggling routes across the Sahel. The ancient salt caravans across the Sahel from Mali making their way to Europe and the Middle East have evolved into caravans of drugs, diamonds and gold from Mali to Europe and the Middle East. The large revenues earned from this smuggling have helped fund the AQIM, the MNLA, MUJAO and other bands and have generated financial and political support from the Wahhabi extremists of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. The collapse of Libya under Kaddafi left these smugglers without a protector so the radical extremists who supplanted Kaddafi offered the smugglers of the Sahel the same protection as before and lots of weapons.

The Sahel is still a major centre of illicit trafficking in goods. The tribes of Northern Mali are emboldened and protected by terrorist organisations in the barren wastes of Northern Mali and live, symbiotically, with the terrorist forces. Their paths are overlapping. While the tribes continue their smuggling Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) engages in illegal taxation in its areas of control, ISIS in Libya is active in human and narcotics trafficking, and Boko Haram generates significant revenues from trade in cocaine and heroin.

Illicit trafficking and threat networks

The trafficking overlaps the terrorist threats. It is matched by a large influx of weapons. Conflict Armament Research, a UK organization that monitors armaments transfers and supply chains, published an important report in late 2016, "Investigating Cross-Border Weapon Transfers in the Sahel." The report confirms that a flow of weapons from Libyan dictator Qaddafi's stockpiles after his fall played a major role in the Tuareg and Islamist insurgencies in Mali in 2012. That same stockpile supplied weapons systems that included man-portable air defence systems to insurgents throughout the Sahel region. But, the report documents that weapons flows since 2011 are no longer predominantly from Libya. Instead, the weapons now come from African countries with weak control of their own weapons stockpiles, notably the Central African Republic and Ivory Coast. Sudan has also been an important source since 2015 of weapons used by insurgents in the Sahel. The report posits that the jihadist attacks in 2015 and 2016 on hotels and government installations specifically in Mali, Burkina Faso and the Ivory Coast also included weapons from a common source in the Middle East; Iraqi assault rifles and Chinese-manufactured weapons are also used by the Islamic State.[i]

The logistical challenge in opposing the terrorist threat

The terrain of the Sahel does not lend itself to conventional warfare. There are broad expanses of sand and dunes, broken up by small villages and, occasionally, a town or city. There are no petrol stations, wells, repair shops, water stores, food stocks or fuel reserves in most of the region. Trucks and buses, as well as conventional armour, are difficult to transport in such a terrain. Air bases are usually suited only to small aircraft and lack the scissor-tables, cranes, fork-lifts and loading equipment which allow the free flow of cargo.

On the positive side, in the war in the Sahel the lack of ground cover and a tree canopy in the region enables a strategy of using the most modern weapons, the Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) which can seek out, observe and destroy small and mobile enemy forces. This has meant that the logistical demands of the war in the Sahel have generated a strategy of the use of high-tech weaponry deployed by Western forces combined with African troops on the ground as garrison forces for towns and cities.

Warfare, in general, in Africa requires a policy of expeditionary war. This is a polite way of saying that massed troop formations have no real use as there are few opposing forces of equal size to fight. African insurgents are bands and groups of often irregular soldiers. Across most of Africa troops must pass through jungles, deserts, mangrove swamps and hostile terrain to get to the enemy, often under heavy fire from the bush. The enemy of the peacekeepers is rarely an army battalion of any strength. Large-scale troop concentrations can sit in a city or town and maintain order, but they rarely can take the battle to the enemy. African armies have virtually no equipment which will allow them to fight an expeditionary war. This is a war of helicopters – in and out movement of troops to desert

encampments or remote landing zones or the shooting up of ground formations by helicopter gunships when the enemy can be located.

This is how African wars are fought. Except for rented MI-8 and MI-24 helicopters leased from the Ukraine and Russia, most of Africa is bereft of air mobile equipment. They are certainly bereft of African pilots (other than South Africans and a small band of Angolans and Nigerians). There are very few African military aircraft capable of fighting or sustaining either air-to-air combat or performing logistics missions. Either they don't exist or they are in such a state of disrepair that African combat pilots are unwitting kamikazes. There are very few airbases in the bush which allow cargo planes to land safely when a war is on given that every rebel group has its share of rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and mortars. There are no fuel reserves at the airports outside most African capitals, and there are no repair facilities. There is no air-to-air refuelling, except that provided by foreign militaries. Indeed, except for Denel in South Africa and the main airbase in Ethiopia there are no places on the continent which perform sophisticated aircraft or weapons maintenance. Indeed most Western European armies themselves don't have sufficient helicopters or heavy-lift capacities. The Africans have less. This lack of transport is critical to moving out the wounded. This takes its toll on the soldiers. This is mirrored in the lack of effective battlefield communications. In Africa the phone system doesn't work in peacetime; why should it work in a period of war? Sending orders and receiving information between the central staff and outlying units is a 'sometimes' process. It sometimes takes days to contact units operating far from command headquarters.

The Europeans are not really ready to assist in the Sahel, despite the EU plans. In 2015 when Angela Merkel made the grand gesture of sending weapons to Kurdish rebels fighting Isil, she

learned that her cargo planes couldn't get off the ground. At the time, the German military confessed that just half of its Transall transport aircraft were fit to fly. Of its 190 helicopters, just 41 were ready to be deployed. Of its 406 Marder tanks, 280 were out of use. In 2016 it emerged that fewer than half of Germany's 66 Tornado aircraft were airworthy. The French Transall fleet is out of date and few are being replaced.

This matches the debacle of the European military effort to conduct warfare on its own, starting in Kosovo. The Europeans wanted to show they had some independent military capability. The amount of bombs, missiles and other tactical devices used in the first two weeks of the Kosovo campaign exceeded the total arsenal storage of the totality of the European Community. The amount spent per day on the bombing of Kosovo, including indirect costs, amounted to over $12.5 million. It would have been far cheaper to buy Serbia than to bomb it. NATO could have offered each Serb $5,000 a head plus moving costs and still saved money. Under NATO rules the US was obliged to pay two-thirds of these costs.

This was just as true in Libya. The Europeans (calling themselves NATO) quickly ran out of ammunition, bombs and money. The US spent almost $1.5 billion in the first wave of attacks by the French and British. As Secretary of Defence Gates said in his speech, "Despite more than 2 million troops in uniform – not counting the U.S. military – NATO has struggled, at times desperately, to sustain a deployment of 25,000 to 45,000 troops — not just in boots on the ground, but in crucial support assets such as helicopters; transport aircraft; maintenance; intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance; and much more." He went on:

"We have the spectacle of an air operations centre designed to handle more than 300 sorties a day struggling to launch about

150. Furthermore, the mightiest military alliance in history is only 11 weeks into an operation against a poorly armed regime in a sparsely populated country – yet many allies are beginning to run short of munitions, requiring the U.S., once more, to make up the difference."

That is the key point in analysing the struggle against terrorism in the Sahel. Despite the good wishes of the French and the other Europeans, success relies on an active U.S. participation and engagement. The French have requested the support of the U.S. military (through NATO) in its ambition to retain control of its former African colonial empire.

There is an ironic side to French requiring assistance from NATO to support its neo-colonial policies. France withdrew from being a full member of NATO in 1966, and remained separated for decades. The reason for French withdrawal was that France believed that NATO was not militarily supportive enough. France's effort to develop its own non-NATO defence capability, including the development of its own nuclear arsenal in the 1960s, was to ensure that the French military could operate its own colonial and post-colonial conflicts more freely. Under de Gaulle, France had attempted to draw NATO into France's colonial conflicts (on France's side). De Gaulle claimed that Algeria was part of France and thus was part of NATO. Therefore, NATO was required to intervene to assist France in putting down Algerian independence movements. After the British and Americans refused to assist with French colonialism, de Gaulle expelled NATO troops from France and set up a more independent French military. Now that France is back in NATO it is making the same request of its partners as De Gaulle.

The Germans lead the EUTM Mali which trains Mali's armed forces and EUCAP Sahel Mali which is training and advising

the country's police, gendarmerie and National Guard. The Eucap Sahel Mission, under the command of the German diplomat Albrecht Conze, is coordinating European aid to the region. Gunther Nooke, Angela Merkel's representative to Africa, a Commissioner for Africa at the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, has proposed a "German Marshall Plan" for Africa to relieve a continent struggling with terrorist bands in the region coupled with a drought which is causing mass famine. However, no money is yet attached to such a plan.

The U.S. has its own strategic interests in fighting the Islamic terrorists in the Sahel because they pose a major danger to U.S business interests in the area; a threat to political stability in Africa as a whole which has produced a human tide of refugees; and, most importantly, this terrorism in the Sahel produces a major source of revenue to the international terrorist structures of Al-Qaeda, Daesh and the myriad sub-groups of these in the Middle East as well as Africa.

The U.S. has agreed to support the French and European efforts to fight terrorism in the Sahel but has been unwilling to commit U.S. regular forces to fighting on the ground. It has offered training, equipment and Special Forces participation in military programs in the Sahel and frequently arranges mass exercises to make sure the trained remain so.

The U.S. military presence in Africa

The US is at war in Africa and has been so for many years. The U.S. has had practical experience in African wars. America has been fighting wars in Africa since the 1950s – in Angola, the DRC, Somalia, the Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Morocco, Libya, Djibouti to name but a few counties. In some countries they used US troops, but in most cases the US financed, armed and

supervised the support of indigenous forces. In its support of the anti- MPLA forces in Angola it sent arms and equipment to the UNITA opposition. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Larry Devlin of the CIA was an unofficial minister of Mobutu's government; the US ran its own air force in the Congo at WIGMO. US airmen supported the South African forces in Kwando, Fort Doppies and Encana bases in the Caprivi from WIGMO. At these bases one could also find soldiers from Southern Rhodesia (in their DC3s) and German, French, Portuguese and other NATO troops.

One of the largest of these bases was at Wheelus Field, in Libya. Wheelus Air Base was located on the Mediterranean coast, just east of Tripoli, Libya. With its 4,600 Americans, the US Ambassador to Libya once called it "a Little America." During the Korean War, Wheelus was used by the US Strategic Air Command, later becoming a primary training ground for NATO forces. Strategic Air Command bomber deployments to Wheelus began on 16 November 1950. SAC bombers conducted 45-day rotational deployments in these staging areas for strikes against the Soviet Union. Wheelus became a vital link in SAC war plans for use as a bomber, tanker refuelling and recon-fighter base. The US left in 1970.

Another giant U.S. base was Kagnew Field in Asmara. The base was established in 1943 as an Army radio station, home to the U.S. Army's 4th Detachment of the Second Signal Service Battalion. Kagnew Station became home for over 5,000 American citizens at a time during its peak years of operation during the 1960s. Kagnew Station operated until April 29, 1977, when the last Americans left.

However, with the end of the Cold War, the US has found itself fighting a much more difficult and insidious war: the war with Al Qaeda. This is much less of a war that involves military

might and prowess. It is a war against the spread of drug dealing, illicit diamonds, illicit gold, human trafficking and the sheltering of Salafists (Islamic militants) who use these methods to acquire cash which has sustained the Al Qaida organisation and now Daesh throughout the world. It is a conflict between organised international crime and states seeking to maintain their legitimacy.

There are now several ‘narco-states’ in Africa. The first to fall was Guinea-Bissau where scores of Colombian Cartel leaders moved in to virtually take over the state. Every day an estimated one tonne of pure Colombian cocaine was thought to be transiting through the mainland’s mangrove swamps and the chain of islands that make up Guinea-Bissau, most of it en route to Europe. This was equally true of Guinea under President Lansana Conte whose wife (and her brother) was shown to be a kingpin in the Guinean drug trade. Many in the National Army were compromised and active participants. This drug trade has spread to Senegal, Togo, Ghana and Nigeria. There are very few jails anywhere in the world which are not home to West African ‘drug mules’ tried or awaiting trial or execution. This drug trade is spreading like wildfire in West Africa, offering rich remuneration to African leaders, generals or warlords well in excess of anything these Africans could hope to earn in normal commerce.

According to a US Congressional Research Service Study published in November 2010, Washington has dispatched anywhere between hundreds and several thousand combat troops, dozens of fighter planes and warships to buttress client dictatorships or to unseat adversarial regimes in dozens of countries, almost on a yearly basis. The record shows the US armed forces intervened in Africa forty-seven times prior to the now-concluded LRA endeavour. The countries receiving one or more US military intervention include both Congos, Libya,

Chad, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Rwanda, Liberia, Central African Republic, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Tanzania, Sudan, Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Eritrea. Between the mid-1950's to the end of the 1970's, only four overt military operations were recorded, though large scale proxy and clandestine military operations were pervasive. Under Reagan-Bush Sr. (1980-1991) military intervention accelerated, rising to eight, not counting the large scale clandestine 'special forces' and proxy wars in Southern Africa. Under the Clinton regime, US militarized intervention in Africa took off. Between 1992 and 2000, seventeen armed incursions took place, including a large-scale invasion of Somalia and military backing for the Rwandan Kagame regime. Clinton intervened in Liberia, Gabon, Congo and Sierra Leone to prop up long-standing troubled regimes. He bombed the Sudan and dispatched military personnel to Kenya and Ethiopia to back proxy clients assaulting Somalia. Under Bush Jr. fifteen US military interventions took place, mainly in Central and East Africa.

Most of the US's African outreach is disproportionally built on military links to client military chiefs. The Pentagon has military ties with fifty-three African countries. The Bush Administration announced in 2002 that Africa was a "strategic priority in fighting terrorism". Henceforth, US foreign policy strategists, with the backing of both liberal and neoconservative congress people, moved to centralize and coordinate a military policy on a continent-wide basis forming the African Command (AFRICOM) and Special Operations Command Africa (SOCAFRICA). These organise African armies, euphemistically called "co-operative partnerships," to support anti-terrorist activities in the continent. U.S. special operations teams are now deployed to 23 African countries and the U.S. operates bases across the continent.

In his 2015 article for TomDispatch.com, Nick Turse, disclosed that there are dozens of US military installations in Africa, besides Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti (Main Operating Base). These numerous cooperative security locations (CSLs), forward operating locations (FOLs) and other outposts have been built by the US in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Senegal, the Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, and Uganda. According to Turse, the US military also had access to locations in Algeria, Botswana, Namibia, São Tomé and Príncipe, Sierra Leone, Tunisia, Zambia and other countries.

Gen. Charles F. Wald divided these into three types:

- Main Operating Base (MOB) is an overseas, permanently manned, well protected base, used to support permanently deployed forces, and with robust sea and/or air access.
- Forward Operating Site (FOS) is a scalable, "warm" facility that can support sustained operations, but with only a small permanent presence of support or contractor personnel. A FOS will host occasional rotational forces and many contain pre-positioned equipment.
- Cooperative Security Location (CSL) is a host-nation facility with little or no permanent U.S. personnel presence, which may contain pre-positioned equipment and/or logistical arrangements and serve both for security cooperation activities and contingency access.

There are a large number of UAV bases as well.

AFRICOM's two forward operating sites are Djibouti's Camp Lemonnier and a base on the United Kingdom's Ascension Island off the west coast of Africa. Described as "enduring locations" with a sustained troop presence and "U.S.-owned

real property," they serve as hubs for staging missions across the continent and for supplying the growing network of outposts there. [ii]

One of the most important of these bases is in Niamey, the capital of Niger, and nearby at Agadez, into which the U.S. has just spent $100 million on improvements. N'Djamena, in Chad, has been heavily used in the battle against Boko Haram.

AFRICOM's programs

The main thrust of AFRICOM programs involves the training and equipping of local forces. It engages in regular exercises with African armies and conducts JCET training programs. Most of these involve working alongside and mentoring local allies. SOCAFRICA's showcase effort, for instance, is Flintlock, an annual training exercise in Northwest Africa involving elite American, European, and African forces, which provides the command with a plethora of publicity. More than 1,700 military personnel from 30-plus nations took part in Flintlock 2016. There are a wide range of programs in addition to the U.S. participation in various UN programs like AMISOM in Somalia.

Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative/Partnership (formerly Pan Sahel Initiative) (TSCTI) Targeting threats to US oil/natural gas operations in the Sahara region Algeria, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Tunisia, Nigeria, and Libya.

Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance Program (ACOTA) (formerly African Crisis Response Initiative) (ACRI)) Part of "Global Peace" Operations Initiative (GPOI) Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger,

Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia.

International Military Training and Education (IMET) program Brings African military officers to US military academies and schools for indoctrination Top countries: Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa.

Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS) (formerly Africa Center for Security Studies) Part of National Defence University, Washington. Provides indoctrination for “next generation” African military officers. This is the “School of the Americas” for Africa. All of Africa is covered.

Foreign Military Sales Program sells US military equipment to African nations via Defence Security Cooperation Agency Top recipients: Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Zimbabwe.

African Coastal and Border Security Program Provides fast patrol boats, vehicles, electronic surveillance equipment, night vision equipment to littoral states.

Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) Military command based at Camp Lemonier in Djibouti. Aimed at putting down rebellions in Ethiopia, Somalia, and Somaliland and targets Eritrea. Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti.

Joint Task Force Aztec Silence (JTFAS) Targets terrorism in West and North Africa. Joint effort of EUCOM and Commander Sixth Fleet (Mediterranean) Based in Sigonella, Sicily and Tamanrasset air base in southern Algeria Gulf of Guinea Initiative, US Navy Maritime Partnership Program Trains African militaries in port and off-shore oil platform security Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Congo-Brazzaville, Congo-Kinshasa, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Nigeria, Sao Tome & Principe, Togo.

Tripartite Plus Intelligence Fusion Cell Based in Kisangani, DRC, to oversee “regional security,” i.e. ensuring U.S. and Israeli access to Congo’s gold, diamonds, uranium, platinum, and coltan. Congo-Kinshasa, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, United States.

Base access for Cooperative Security Locations (CSLs) and Forward Operating Locations (FOLs) U.S. access to airbases and other facilities Gabon, Kenya, Mali, Morocco, Tunisia, Namibia, Sao Tome & Principe, Senegal, Uganda, Zambia, Algeria.

Africa Command (AFRICOM) Headquarters for all US military operations in Africa in Stuttgart.

Africa Regional Peacekeeping (ARP) Liaison with African “peacekeeping” military commands East Africa Regional Integration Team: Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Uganda, Kenya, Madagascar, Tanzania. North Africa Regional Integration Team: Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya. Central Africa Regional Integration Team: Congo (Kinshasa), Congo (Brazzaville), Chad.

Regional Integration Teams: South Africa, Zimbabwe, Angola. West Africa Regional Integration Team: Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Niger, Western Sahara.

Africa Partnership Station (APS) Port visits by USS Fort McHenry and High Speed Vessel (HSV) Swift. Part of US Navy’s Global Fleet Station Initiative. Training and liaison with local military personnel to ensure oil production security Senegal, Liberia, Ghana, Cameroon, Gabon, Sao Tome & Principe.

The U.S. taxpayer is paying for French neo-colonialism

The U.S. military is engaged in over 34 nations in Africa in the fight against terrorism and the growth of the various Al-Qaeda and ISIL affiliates in the region. One of the key problems in conducting this on-going battle is that the political situation in each Francophone country is determined by the needs of *Françafrique* to keep their chosen president in power; not necessarily what the Africans want. A good example is Mali, where the French intervened militarily in January 2013 to stop an uprising of various militant groups in the north.

As the price for this assistance, France signed a new defence agreement with Mali, which would allow it to maintain a considerable military presence in the country. The agreement's eleven pages of mostly general statements say that French military troops and civil servants will be allowed to stay in Mali, build military bases, operate, if needed, with Malian troops, etc., for the next five years. The five years' term, as written in the document, is renewable.

This was a great triumph for France. Ever since the inauguration of the first President of Mali, Modibo Keïta, Mali had resisted the military aspects of the Colonial Pact. The last French soldier departed Mali in 1961. Keita refused to sign the defence protocols. Keita didn't allow French military bases or troops on Malian soil. Even after the French had him assassinated by Lt. Moussa Traore, the Malians continued to refuse the defence pact. Traore's successors Alpha Oumar Konare and Amadou Toumany Toure also refused, despite huge diplomatic and economic pressure. The most France could get in Mali was a 1985 military cooperation accord which allowed France to give military training and technical assistance to Malian troops.

Now, after engaging French troops to fight the Islamic forces in the North, France took over military control of Mali. After having defeated the invaders, and chasing them out of

Timbuktu and other northern cities, and disarming factions of the rebellions, the French military banned the Malian army from Kidal, the central city of the northern Azawad region. The territory is claimed by different rebel groups, but it is under the de facto control of the mainly Tuareg MNLA (National Movement for Liberation of the Azawad). France allowed the rebels to occupy the area, reorganise and later gain a place at the post-war negotiations table.

France has openly supported the MNLA for a long time and insisted that they be a party to the negotiations with the Malian government who did not want to negotiate with the Tuareg rebels. Then the French put on the agenda the division of Mali into two parts, despite the Malian refusal. There was a short interval of peace and hostilities started again. The French realised that they could no longer afford the military costs of the Malian war and persuaded the UN to send peacekeepers to Mali. In December 2013 France announced 60% reduction in its troops deployed in Mali to 1,000 by March 2014. Interim peace deals were agreed but were quickly broken. By August 2016 there continued to be attacks on foreign forces. More than 100 peacekeepers have died since the UN mission's deployment in Mali in 2013, making it one of the deadliest places to serve for the UN.

The French were satisfied that the bulk of the expenses for the capturing of Mali in the web of *Françafrique* were being paid for by the "international community" (the UN, the US, and ECOWAS). In 2015, the European Union also joined to promote France's ambitions. France got its military pact with Mali and control of the country. This seemed such a good idea the French then expanded its ambitions to pursue the military options of *Operation Barkhane*based in Chad to cover Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger and make sure that the costs of this expansion of the reach of *Françafrique* were being

passed on to the ‘international community’; the large part of which is the U.S. taxpayer (directly and indirectly).

The same situation emerged in Niger and the Central African Republic. The French intervened militarily in domestic disputes which they created and took over de facto control of the countries. Claiming that this was a battle against “terrorism” the French were able to pass on the costs of their reoccupation of their former colonies using European, UN and, mainly, U.S. taxpayer money. Both African countries remain at war with domestic enemies in conflicts created by France and perpetuated by French policies towards reinstalling the rigours of *Françafrique*; all in the name of counter-terrorism. The UN, the EU and the U.S. don’t get a chance to decide who is the enemy in francophone Africa; this is decided by France. They only get to pay for it and use their military to train the soldiers who keep *Françafrique* in place.

Perhaps the current NATO meeting in Brussels will make it clear to the new Macron Government that the U.S. is capable of choosing its own enemies and, as in the time of de Gaulle, the U.S. is not in the business of preserving French neo-colonial rule on the continent.

End notes:

[i] John Campbell,, “Weapons in the Sahel”,CFR, November 22, 2016
[ii] Nick Turse. “America’s War-Fighting Footprint in Africa”, TomDispatch 22/5/17