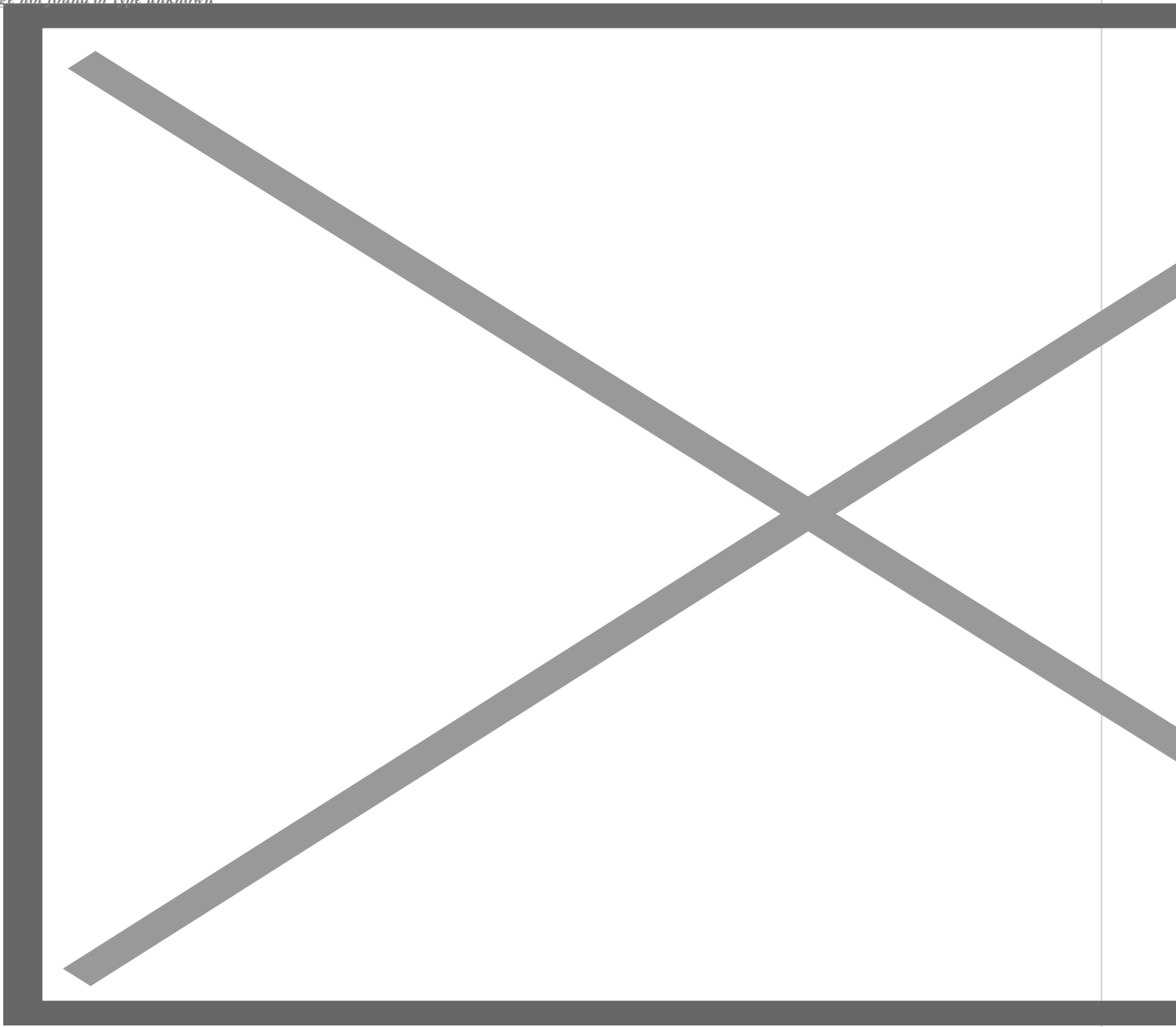


Africa will not allow France's exploitation to continue

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France completely ignored the people whose wealth it had been stealing.

*from MEMO / Middle East Monitor / by Motasem A Dalloul ** abujomaaGaza*

In 1977, when Djibouti gained its independence after 115 years of brutal French occupation, the era of European colonialism in Africa had almost come to an end. Only small enclaves occupied by Spain and Britain remained.

Like other colonisers, France had not left its former colonies before making sure that it could exploit their wealth and maintain a form of authority over them and thus access all kinds of natural resources which do not exist in Europe.

Under an unofficial policy referred to as “Francafrique” France has maintained ties with politicians and officials it put in power across its former colonies after the independence movements of the 1950s and 1960s. This policy also extended to include businessmen whom France enabled to create businesses and become commercial partners working for the benefit of their masters in Paris.

During its colonial era, like others, France enslaved its African subjects, killed millions of them and sold millions of others into the slave trade. France imposed its language and culture, and kept Africans illiterate and poor. Before ending its colonialism, it put in place a new form of control; economic and political colonialism.

Early this month, two African analysts told the BBC that “the historical record [of France] provides some support for these grievances. French colonial rule established political systems designed to extract valuable resources while using repressive strategies to retain control.” They also said that France “forged defence agreements that saw it regularly intervene militarily on behalf of unpopular pro-French leaders to keep them in power.”

France completely ignored the people whose wealth it had been stealing. So, when an ambitious leader rose through the ranks and called for giving a reasonable portion of a country’s wealth to its people, he was either toppled or killed.

Since 1963, France has assassinated more than 22 African presidents who refused its colonial power and attempted to redefine the independence of their countries. French intelligence services, believed to be carrying out coups and murders in Africa, have been known very well by Africans.

Following the recent coup in Niger, former Permanent Representative to the African Union Mission in Washington, Dr Arikana Chihombori-Quao, from Zimbabwe, explained: “If you are an African president coming to power, you are told as long as you stay away from discussions pertaining to their [French] presence and military presence in the country, training of your military by France, equipping of your military by France, do not talk about the natural resources whose French companies have the first right of approval, do not talk and make sure you continue to deposit your bank reserves with the French Central Bank. If you avoid those areas, then you are free to run your country any way you want.”

The late French President Jacques Chirac acknowledged that “without Africa, France will slide down into the rank of a third [world] power.”

In an address on 26 July 2007, then French President Nicolas said: “The colonials came and looted, helped themselves, exploited, took resources and wealth that did not belong to them. They stripped the colonised of their personalities, of their freedom, of their lands and of the fruits of their labours.”

But France has continued to deal with Africa in this way, while claiming it is sending aid, spreading

democracy and defending Africans against terrorist attacks.

However, it does not address any of the people's problems including violence, poverty, lack of economic opportunities, poor education systems and poor infrastructure. The West African countries – which were former French colonies – are the poorest countries in the world despite the fact that they are the richest in terms of natural resources. The 'democracy' that Paris seeks to maintain here is the protection of pro-France leaders.

The continued deterioration of security in most West African countries proves that the claim that forces are defending African nations against terrorism is just a pretext for maintaining military powers on their soil.

After the wave of recent coups, which were apparently orchestrated by Paris, France felt as though it was facing the prospect of being sidelined by the African strategists, who have been looking for other partners. A report by Economist Intelligence stated: "France is fully aware of Africa's long-term economic potential and the commercial threat posed by others looking to build their own economic and financial links to the continent."

Former AU representative Quao said: "It is unbelievable that to this day you can have a country like Niger to be second poorest country in the world and yet all their resources are going to France... At every level, it is unfair, unacceptable and I don't know how the Western powers go to sleep everyday knowing of the carnage, the havoc they are creating in Africa and hope that this will go on forever."

Niger has become the latest country in West Africa where a corrupt and pro-France leader has been ousted. Previously, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and Chad – all former French colonies – ousted pro-France leaders and pushed French forces out of their lands. This trend is likely to continue and Africans will be cautious when they deal with new partners in order not to repeat the same mistake committed by their former colonisers.

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