

Network of African Research Institutes: The Third Pan-Africa Newsletter

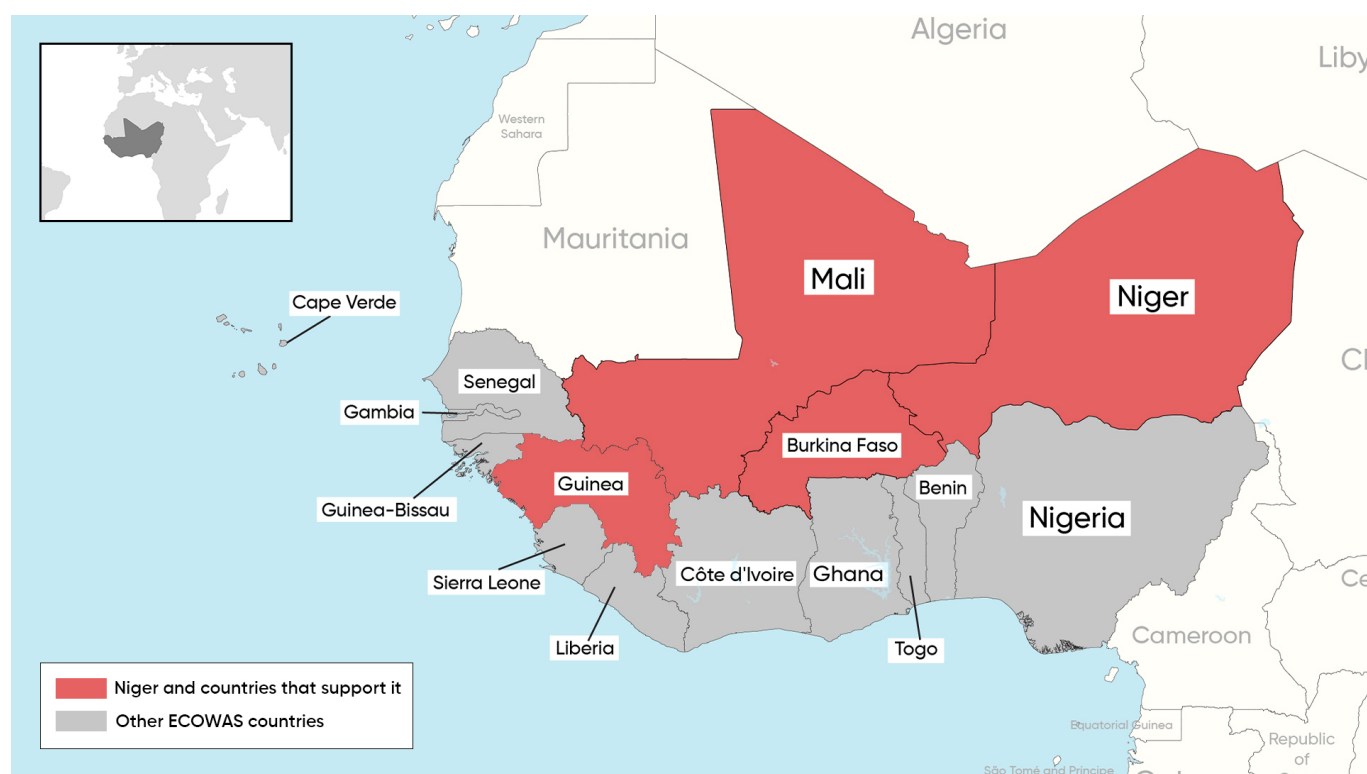


Image via People's Dispatch.

Dear friends,

Greetings from the desk of **Tricontinental Pan-Africa**.

'We are going to make the French leave! ECOWAS isn't independent, it's being manipulated by France', **declared** one Nigerien protestor in response to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) threatening to intervene militarily in the West African country in early August. Only a handful of progressive groups outside of Niger, such as the West African People's Organisation, have **warned** that a military escalation would restore former inequalities that largely benefit Western multinationals and a few African leaders, undermine national self-determination and sovereignty, and 'have disastrous consequences for the Nigerien people and the entire West African sub-region ... likely to aggravate the current widespread insecurity perpetrated by jihadist groups'.

In a country of some 25 million people that ranks 189th out of 191 on the Human Development Index, the recent mass demonstration of thousands of civilians near a French military base outside the capital not only represents the popular call to sever political and military ties with France but the understanding that in so doing, greater hope exists for uprooting the economic structure that reproduces underdevelopment in the region. Home to Africa's highest grade of uranium ores, Niger is the world's seventh-largest producer of uranium-based fuels, yet remains one of the lowest consumers of electricity — with an electrification rate of around 17.5%. One in three light bulbs in France is powered by uranium mined from open pits near the city of Arlit, which has been **garrisoned** by French troops. A set of historical and contemporary **injustices**, exacerbated by the role of the West, lie behind the mass support of the coup.



In late July, just a few days before the military takeover and groundswell of support for the deposition of Niger's President Mohamed Bazoum, 184 activists representing 38 anti-imperialist African organisations met in South Africa under the banner of Dilemmas of Humanity to deliberate how to confront the vicious realities faced by the African peoples. Foreshadowing events in Niger, one of the calls to emerge from this regional meeting was to launch a mass action campaign demanding the immediate closure of all foreign military bases on the continent. The conference resolved that the establishment of foreign military bases on African soil is a violation of the continent's sovereignty and an escalation of its militarisation.

What theoretical frameworks are most relevant to the resounding calls for sovereignty and dignity – two of the core themes of our work – that not only contemplate the historical and material basis of the continent's continued underdevelopment and marginalisation but provide a framework for effective and immediate action to transform the situation? What now is the task of Africa's intellectuals?

African intellectuals have confronted these questions for decades: from Egyptian Samir Amin's efforts to develop compelling social thought in Dakar in the 1970s to the work of Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah (*Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, 1965), Guyana's Walter Rodney (*How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*,

1972), and Tanzania's Issa Shivji (*Class Struggles in Tanzania*, 1976). At the Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, much of our work goes into answering these questions, as seen in our studies on Western foreign **militarisation** and **new development theory** anchored in the Global South. Through joint collaboration within our Network of African Research Institutes (NARI), we are hoping to build our capacity to support the leading social movements confronting the dilemmas of humanity on the continent; if you are interested in collaborating with us, contact mikaela@thetricontinental.org.

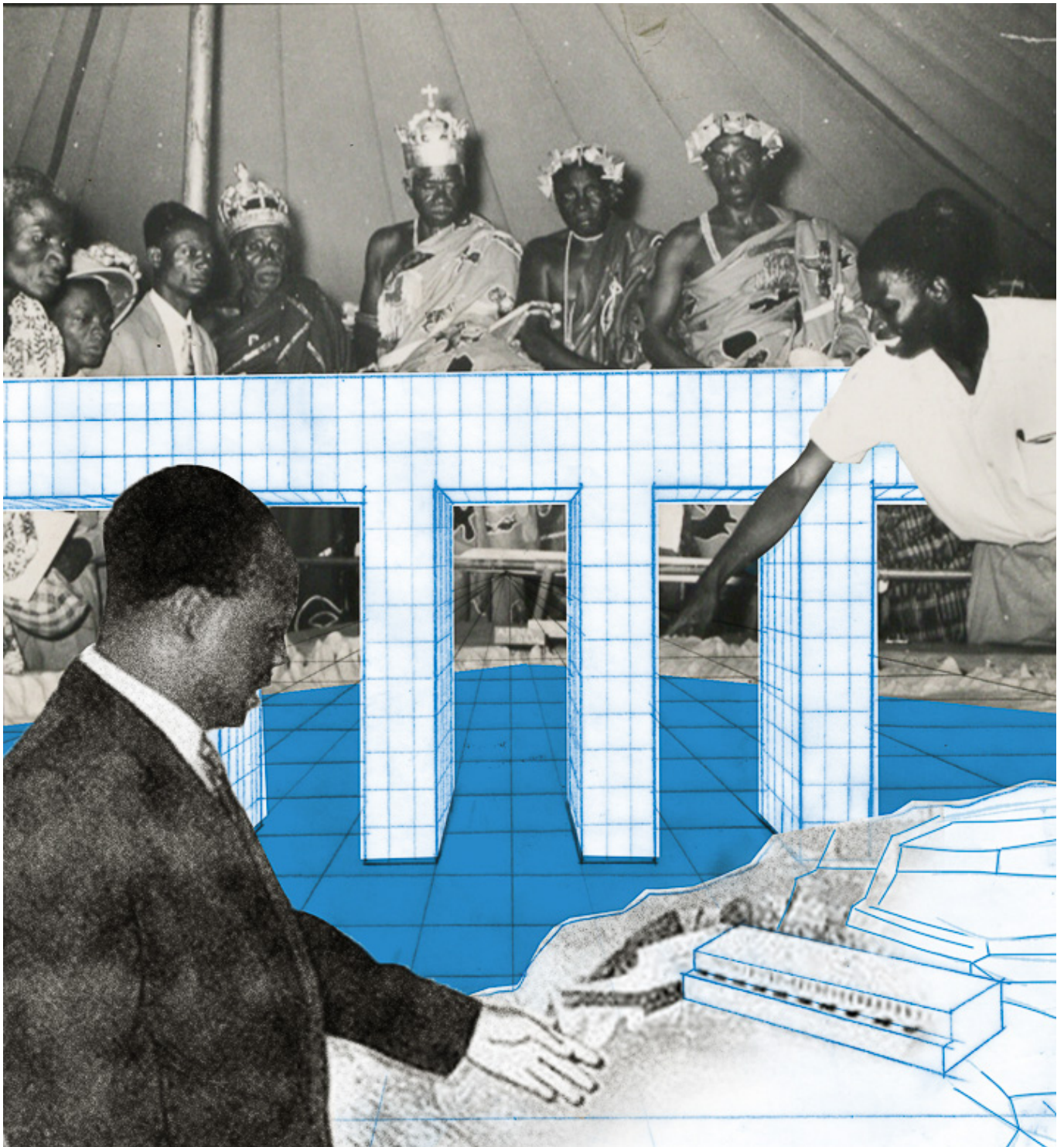


Image from *The World Needs a New Socialist Development Theory*.*

An avenue of this work is inviting intellectuals to contribute to our upcoming pamphlet series *Interventions*. In the inaugural issue later this year, Issa Shivji closely examines the meaning and relevance of Pan-Africanism. As new configurations erupt in the Sahel and the young people of Africa (who make up 70% of the population) engage in daily acts of resistance towards achieving sovereignty and dignity, Shivji puts forward an important framing for the political vehicles that must be built:

... in the course of re-imagining Pan-Africanism, we should reconstruct it as an ideology of the working people, as an ideology of social emancipation and, therefore, inextricably embedded in the struggles of the working people. This is the task that is before public intellectuals of Africa and organic intellectuals of the African working people.

Why Pan-Africanism? Why now?

African nations and peoples have increasingly diverged from the Atlantic powers, whose presence on the continent has been characterised by militarisation, economic strangulation through international financial institutions, and tepid diplomatic policies that give little room for African nations to act in their own interests and pursue a sovereign development project. Given the failure of Western so-called ‘development’ models and governance structures, we need new locomotives based on a shared political project to represent and advance the collective aspirations of the people not only domestically but the shifting balance of forces globally. The drive for war internationally and military aggression regionally offers nothing to the peoples of Africa.

With the recent news of the expansion of BRICS (adding Egypt and Ethiopia as formal members as of 1 January 2024 and many others keen to participate), it is clear that the frustration with the previous world order has bubbled over. Africa wants a different world arrangement: one in which Africa is no longer beholden to the ‘united West’ but one based on new institutional apparatuses and frameworks grounded not in dependency, humiliation, and competition, but on sovereignty, dignity, and cooperation.

Warmly,

Yvonne & Mika

Note

* The Akosombo Dam in the Volta River, inaugurated in 1965 during Kwame Nkrumah’s presidency, was the largest single development investment in Ghana’s history at the time. The planning of the project involved broad public consultation, including with different representatives of Traditional Councils. See Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, *The World Needs a New Socialist Development Theory*, dossier no. 66, 4 July 2023, <https://dev.thetricontinental.org/dossier-66-development-theory/>.



Yvonne Phyllis

Yvonne is a researcher, author, and teacher. She received a master's degree in Political and International Studies from The University Currently Known as Rhodes. She is currently the co-director of operations at The Forge, a radical pan-African project in Johannesburg, Braamfontein. Prior to joining The Forge, Yvonne was a lecturer of Political and International Studies at The University Currently Known as Rhodes. Her research interests include the landlessness and exploitation of farmworkers in South Africa and their land aspirations as well as land redistribution and agrarian reform in Africa.



Mikaela Erskog

Mika is an educator and researcher. She is part of the Pan Africanism Today Secretariat, which coordinates the regional articulation of the International People's Assembly and is also part of the No Cold War coordination committee, a peace platform promoting multilateralism and maximum global cooperation. She is also part of Dongsheng, an international collective of researchers interested in Chinese politics and society, and hosts The Crane: An Africa-China Podcast.