

Go Over Your Debris, Hope of the Beheaded - Tomorrow, the Sun Will be High in the Sky: The First Pan-Africa Newsletter (2024)



Yancouba Badji (Niger), *Départ pour la route clandestine d'Agadez (Niger) vers la Libye* ('Departure for the Clandestine Route From Agadez (Niger) to Libya'), n.d.

Dear friends,

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

From 13 January to 11 February 2024, the TotalEnergies CAF Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON), a premier sporting event, is being hosted in Côte d'Ivoire. Though the tournament, featuring 24 African nations, is a celebration of football, it also casts a shadow over the profound challenges faced by Africans, both in the host nation and across the continent.

This edition of the AFCON is set against a particularly tense political backdrop in Côte d'Ivoire. Incumbent

President Alassane Ouattara is reportedly **extending** his influence beyond his final presidential term. He is remembered for his tenure as prime minister from 1990 to 1993, a position he assumed under IMF pressure on then President Félix Houphouët-Boigny to appoint him. Outarra's presidency, following the contentious 2010 election, was marked by the **illegal arrest and extradition** of his opponent Laurent Gbagbo to the ICC by mostly French troops, in the aftermath of election-related violence resulting in 3,000 deaths. After a decade held at the ICC, **Gbagbo was acquitted** of all charges.

Ouattara's actions have often been interpreted as aligning with neocolonial interests, particularly those of France. He implemented a **structural adjustment programme** during his prime ministership and engaged in **military cooperation** with the French. Outtara supported **the imposition of the Eco currency** in place of the French-controlled CFA franc, attempted to **destabilise Mali**, and **provided asylum to French soldiers** expelled from Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. The global appeal of the AFCON tournament is expected to divert international media attention from these controversial actions, casting a more favorable light on his administration.

However, the political situation in Côte d'Ivoire is just one facet of a larger narrative. A critical aspect of this year's AFCON is the enduring influence of French capital in West Africa. After all, the event's main sponsor is the French multinational TotalEnergies. The company has been assertively expanding its reach, tapping into oil and gas resources in countries such as **Mozambique** and **Uganda**, and even venturing into solar energy projects in **Burkina Faso**. TotalEnergies' adjusted net profit for 2022 stood at US\$36.2 billion, **double** its earnings from the previous year; CEO Patrick Pouyanné described this surge as due to the 'favourable environment' created by high oil and gas prices following Russia's movement in Ukraine.

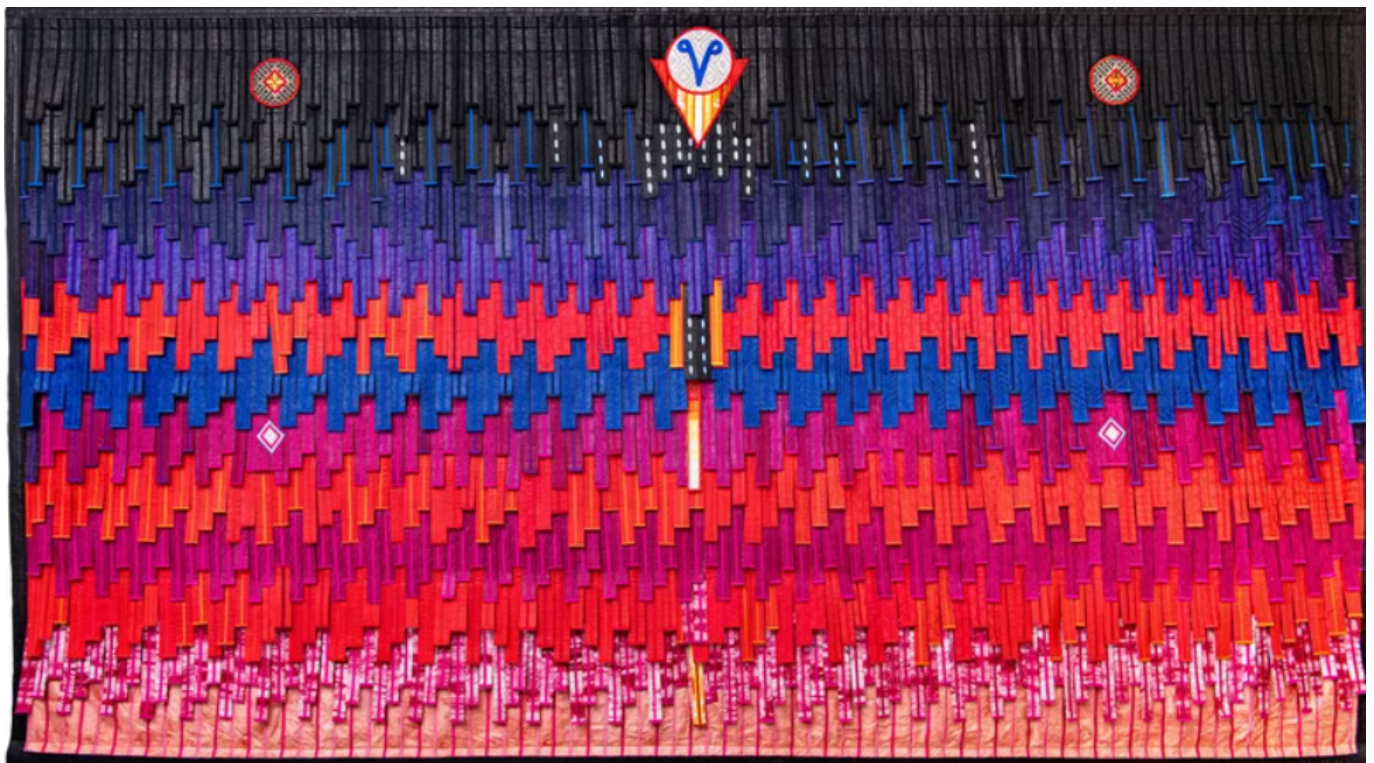


Quattara Watts (Côte d'Ivoire) *The Queen of Spades (II)*, 2021.

This continued neo-colonial domination has sparked new political shifts in the region marked by a surge in **military coups** over the past few years, primarily driven by the state's inability to effectively address the multifaceted issues faced by its people. This region, rich in cultural diversity and natural resources, has long grappled with challenges such as economic instability, corruption, weak governance, and escalating security threats in the Sahel. The presence of foreign militaries in the Sahel and France's overwhelming influence in the economies of most of the Francophone countries in the region was another contributing factor to the people's dissatisfaction.

In nations like Mali, Burkina Faso, and **Niger**, a combination of governance failures and rampant corruption has led to a series of military interventions. Led largely by younger military personnel from rural backgrounds, the armed forces in these countries stepped in, presenting themselves as solutions to these deep-rooted issues. These coups have garnered popular support, largely because they seem to represent a definitive shift away from both the lingering colonial ties with France and the ineffective, corrupt civilian governments that have been unable – like most African countries – to break free from their institutional dependency on Bretton Woods institutions. On 28 January, these three countries **left** the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) abruptly.

With the coming of new governments and security and economic alliances among countries that have experienced military coups, for instance the signing of the Liptako-Gourm Charter that established the Alliance of Sahel States, the focus has primarily been on political governance and security reforms. This includes significant moves like the withdrawal of French military forces from Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso. However, what often remains underreported are the substantial efforts these nations are making towards resource sovereignty.



Abdoulaye Konaté (Mali), *Le vent (fié)* ('The Trusted Wind'), 2020.

In terms of mining, Burkina Faso recently overhauled its Mining Code, which has significantly impacted the royalties from gold mining in the country, whilst Mali revised theirs to increase the state's stake from 20% to 35%. Both Mali and Burkina Faso have **signed** agreements with Russia's state-owned energy company to develop state-owned nuclear power plants for peaceful use.

In December 2024, Niger **nationalised** the operation of its drinking water under a new state-owned enterprise, in a country where access to drinking water is **estimated** to be less than 50%. In doing so, it ended its contract with the French company Veolia and its subsidiary Société d'Exploitation des Eaux du Niger which had exclusively run the water sector. Burkina Faso is working towards **recovering** the sugar industry, taking steps towards taking over the majority shares transferred to foreign owners in 1998 in the Comoé sugar company.



Uncovering and understanding these pursuits is not only particularly critical to national, regional, and continental struggles for sovereignty but, as described our latest Studies in Contemporary Dilemmas, *Hyper-Imperialism: A Dangerous, Decadent New Stage* (January 2024), they form part of a key grouping of countries:

...on the frontline of the Global South's struggle against imperialism. Whilst they are all either fully or partially economically dependent on the West, they are actively pursuing political independence. They are, therefore, subjected to extreme hybrid warfare from imperialism; put simply, most of these countries are included in US intelligence's critical targets for regime change.

...[Regarding the Sahel states] their political situation is still unstable, and they are struggling to guarantee their actual independence from imperialist powers.

Burkinabé griot, lawyer, and writer **Frédéric Pacéré Titinga** – whose cultural heritage group, Living Human Treasures, received their first-ever national award in a ceremony **hosted** by coup leader President Ibrahim Traoré in May 2023 – captures the state of struggle in West Africa today in his poem ‘Hymn to Debris’ (2021):

The mountain caved in
Just before dawn!
Night reigns completely!
The huge mahogany of the village
Has blown to pieces;
The termites hold the power of the Crowns.

...

Go under the enemy howls,
Dark survivor,
Tormented one-legged man
Unfortunate centipede
Go over your debris
Hope of the beheaded
Go!

Tomorrow,
The sun will be high in the sky.

Warmly,

Kambale



Kambale Musavuli

Kambale Musavuli, a political analyst at the Center for Research on the Congo-Kinshasa, currently serves as the West Africa representative for Pan Africanism Today's secretariat from his base in Accra, Ghana. His work analyses Kwame Nkrumah's 7-Year Development Plan and the evolving political scene in West Africa. Musavuli aims to contribute to the transformation of African societies and bolster the progress towards a new era of Pan-Africanism, driven by the people. In addition to his advocacy, he is a skilled technologist and techno-activist focusing on cybersecurity training for African institutions.