

Demonstrations in Support of Recent Coup in Burkina Faso

West African state witnessed youth-led attacks on French embassy and installations amid security challenges

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There have been two military coups in the West African state of Burkina Faso since January as attacks by rebel groupings are fueling anxiety over national security concerns.

The latest putsch was led by Capt. Ibrahim Traore, who with his fellow officers, deposed Col. Paul Henri Damiba on September 30.

Traore cited the failure of the Damiba administration to curb a jihadist insurgency which has destabilized large swaths of territory inside the country since 2015. France, the former colonial power in what was then known as Upper Volta, has military forces in Burkina Faso ostensibly to protect the interests of Paris and the local government.

However, in Burkina Faso and other former French colonies in West Africa, demonstrations have surfaced over the last year demanding the withdrawal of military units and diplomatic personnel from Paris. During the United Nations General Assembly in September, the interim Prime Minister of neighboring Mali, denounced French involvement in his country while accusing the administration of President Emmanuel Macron of attempts to utilize mercenaries from Ivory Coast to overthrow the military regime in the capital of Bamako.

After the recent change of government in the capital of Ouagadougou, the French embassy and other institutions were violently attacked by Burkinabe youth carrying their national flags along with that of Russia. These incidents are a reflection of the strain relations between Paris and the African continent.

These political developments on the African continent should not be a surprise to any serious observers in the current period. A legacy of enslavement and colonialism continues to hamper the capacity of the continent to gain its appropriate position within the broader context of world affairs.

Burkina Faso since its independence in 1960 has been subjected to the presence of economic and military interests from Paris. Other states within the Sahel and broader West Africa region have been targeted for destabilization for decades.

Since the formation of the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) and its French counterpart consisting of the Foreign Legion and Operation Barkhane, the social situation throughout many areas within the West Africa region has deteriorated. Guinea-Conakry, also a former colony of France, has undergone persistent turmoil since the military overthrow of the founding Democratic Party (PDG), once headed by President Ahmed Sekou Toure from 1958-1984.

Guinean administrations since 1984 have abandoned the PDG's concept of the African Democratic Revolution, Pan-Africanism and Socialism. Yet, the living conditions of the people have not benefited from this shift to the right in regard to domestic and foreign policy.

Mali also underwent a revolutionary experiment in popular democracy and socialist orientation under the first post-colonial administration of President Modibo Keita who ruled the country from 1960-1968, when he was deposed in a military coup. Mali in modern times has undergone two military coups since 2020. Plagued by the same rebel insurgencies as neighboring Burkina Faso, Niger, Cameroon, Chad and Nigeria, military and intelligence assistance from the U.S. and France have only resulted in the lessening of the capacity of these states to address their own security concerns.

Imperialist Research Centers and Continuing Military Interference in Africa

Western think tanks which serve to rationalize imperialist foreign policy in Africa and other geo-political regions are attempting to attribute the dramatic shifts towards the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China as it relates to economic and security issues to some nefarious tactics utilized by Moscow and Beijing. These centers of imperialist strategic planning can never own up to the abysmal failure of neo-colonialism in Africa which has maintained the continent in a dependent status within the world economic system.

The International Crisis Group (ICG) provides one such example of the dishonest justification for the growing antagonism even among military forces within West Africa. Their position closely aligns itself with the U.S. Department when spokesperson Vedant Patel [said](#):

“We have spoken clearly about the destabilizing impact of both rampant disinformation but also the Wagner Group's activities globally. Countries where the group has been deployed find themselves weaker and less secure, and we've seen that in a number of cases in Africa alone.”

Nonetheless, the Russian-based military services company Wagner has only been operational on the continent for the last few years. This can easily be compared with the centuries of interference and destabilization efforts by the collective imperialism of the western capitalist countries in Europe and North America.

This same State Department official conveniently ignored the impact of AFRICOM and Operation Barkhane in West Africa. Many of the officers which have staged coups in West Africa over the last decade had close ties with Washington and Paris through military

training colleges and joint maneuvers with the Pentagon, the European Union (EU) Forces, NATO and the French Foreign Legion.

This same article cited above also quotes the ICG deputy director for Africa, Rinaldo Depagne, as saying in response to the question as to whether Russia played a role in the recent changes in governance in West Africa:

“This is very difficult to say and to prove. But Russia is certainly closer to now cut a deal with Burkina than ever and certainly that Russia was with president – former President Damiba, and this for several reasons. First one is President Traore’s statement. And President Traore, eight days ago, said that it could solicit diversified military assistance without naming Russia, but everyone was thinking about Russia. Second reason, Yevgeny Prigozhin, the head of Wagner PMC Enterprise, offered to work with Traore. Third reason, we have now a legal act, and according to this act, the president negotiates and ratifies international treaties himself. So, it opened the door for him to decide whether he will work with Russia or not.”

Such viewpoints are being articulated in conjunction with the failed attempts by the State Department and the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs to coax African governments into taking a position in support of NATO in the Russian special military operation in Ukraine. U.S. President Joe Biden has invited African Union (AU) heads-of-state to attend a White House summit in December in the aftermath of the Russia-Africa gathering in Ethiopia in November.

Interestingly enough, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba was forced to cut short a trip to Africa following Russian missile strikes across his country beginning on October 10. Kuleba had proposed a Ukraine-Africa summit as well.

An earlier attempt by the U.S.-backed President Volodymyr Zelensky to address the AU only garnered two attendees. On a mass level there has been noticeable solidarity with the Russian Federation as it relates to the Ukraine situation. Even outside of the West Africa region, in states such as Ethiopia and South Africa, two of the largest economies and population groups within the AU, youth have held demonstrations where Russian flags were flown.

However, the reality of racial discrimination and brutality displayed by Ukrainian authorities during the early days of the Russian intervention has not left the minds of African governments and their people. African students studying in Ukraine during February and March of 2022, reported numerous incidents of beatings, denials of admission to public places and transportation facilities, among other problems.

Since these incidents, the western corporate and government-controlled media outlets have attempted to erase these horrible occurrences from the minds of African people and the world community. The openly Nazi militias and political organizations which have existed in Ukraine for decades are ignored in the diplomatic language and media accounts of events inside the country.

Lessons for the Peace and Antiwar Groupings within the Imperialist States

Those mainstream peace and antiwar organizations in Western Europe and North America have taken a political line quite similar to the U.S. State Department. The Russian

Federation are viewed as aggressors while the threat of fascism and NATO expansion is largely ignored.

This undoubtedly is related to the fact that there is a Democratic administration in the White House with an evenly split Senate and slight majority within the House of Representatives. Although this political configuration in the U.S. has not delivered on the promises made during the 2020 campaigns which committed to social spending to alleviate poverty along with voting rights, a lessening of police brutality and women's equality, what is actually transpiring is the worsening plight of African Americans through police brutality, institutional racism and benign neglect.

Women in the U.S. no longer have a legal right to their reproductive freedom while the rapid accelerating rates of inflation in the key sectors of the economy is disproportionately impacting the impoverished, nationally oppressed and other marginalized groups. The Biden administration has failed to stem inflation while the Federal Reserve Bank has induced a global recession sending shockwaves of uncertainty among both the ruling class and the majority working and oppressed peoples on a global scale.

The western-based social justice and peace organizations would be served well to study developments in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Rather than viewing their interests as inextricably linked to the capitalist class dominated by finance capital and imperialist militarism, the declining standards of living in the West can only be addressed through the international solidarity of the people to end all wars and exploitation by the ruling class.

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