

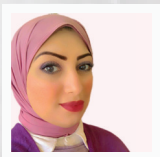


AFRICAN NARRATIVES

# Implications of Announcement of French Troops' Withdrawal from Côte d'Ivoire in 2025: Political and Security Shifts



Author:



**Nashwa Abdelnaby**

Logistics Researcher, Information and Decision Support Center, Cabinet of Egypt

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## Introduction:

Amid rapid geopolitical shifts, 2025 appears to be a pivotal year in the history of relations between France and the African continent. In 2024, African demands for the departure of French troops from the continent grew, a move that some described as a significant setback to Paris' influence in Africa. It seems that Africa is on the verge of a new phase, with its

countries striving to reorganize their relationships with major international powers, moving away from the long-standing French dominance. While Paris is retreating militarily and economically, debates have emerged about the future of its economic role and strategies to confront the rise of new influences, leading to a crossroads in France-Africa relations

# African countries breaking free from the French yoke



Central African Republic



Niger



Burkina Faso



Mali



Senegal



Chad



Guinea



Ivory Coast





# The year 2024 witnessed the replacement of France by competing international powers in several African countries, and Paris faced significant blows, which can be summarized as follows:

## Key Indicators of the Decline of French Influence in Africa

1

### Withdrawal of French Forces

France has withdrawn its troops from African countries such as Mali, Chad, and Burkina Faso

2

### Accusations of Supporting Terrorism

Increasing accusations against France for supporting armed groups in the Sahel region

3

### Rise of China and Russia

China and Russia are increasing their military and economic influence in Africa

4

### Reduction of Military Presence

Reduction of French forces in Ivory Coast and Senegal

5

### Breaking away from the CFA franc

African countries seek to free themselves from the dominance of the French currency

6

### Economic Independence

New partnerships with China, Russia, and Turkey to develop African economies



## Gradual Withdrawal of French Troops:

The gradual withdrawal of French troops from Africa has accelerated in recent years due to the rising opposition to this military presence in African countries. These nations have called for the departure of French forces, citing the failure of France's strategy

in combating terrorism and the increasing jihadist activities in the region. These shifts began with Mali's decision in 2022 to expel French troops, and the withdrawal continued gradually, extending to other countries such as Burkina Faso and Chad.



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In 2024, France completed its withdrawal from Mali after nine years of intervention in Operation Barkhane, and Mali canceled its defense agreements with France in May of the same year. Additionally, Burkina Faso expelled French diplomats in May 2024, accusing them of “subversive activities.” In December 2024, Chad began implementing a plan for the gradual withdrawal of French troops, with the military base in Faya being handed over to local authorities.

This gradual withdrawal reflects the decline of French influence in Africa, especially in light of the increasing interventions by other international powers in the region, seeking to exploit the situation for their own benefit.

### **France in the Crosshairs of Accusations:**

Recently, France has faced accusations of supporting armed groups in the Sahel countries by providing intelligence that facilitates precise attacks. However, France has not responded to these accusations, raising doubts among these countries. Despite the lack of concrete evidence, these accusations fuel anti-France sentiments and are used to cover up the failures of African governments in achieving security. The African media in the Sahel plays a significant role in attacking France, accusing it of using military bases to gather information and enhance its influence. In Senegal, with the rise of the PASTEF party in the 2024 legislative elections, France is accused of intervening in the region’s affairs, while Russia is seen as an alternative partner.

### **China’s Ascendancy:**

The rise of major international powers like China in Africa has been a shock to France, as the

continent has become a battleground for intense competition between powers seeking to displace Paris from its historical influence. China’s policy has been characterized by its focus on economic interests, away from ideological issues, along with the principle of non-interference in internal affairs, making it a preferred partner for several African countries compared to the traditional French model. From January 5 to 11, 2025, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi is visiting four African countries—Namibia, the Republic of Congo, Chad, and Nigeria—continuing an annual tradition. This visit reflects China’s increasing interest in Africa, as it seeks to leverage African votes in the United Nations, with a focus on security issues at a time when France is withdrawing its troops from the region.

### **Russia’s Rise:**

Russia has been able to exploit the vacuum left by the United States and France in Africa, strengthening its security role in the Sahel triad countries (Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso) through cooperation with the armed forces of these nations. Despite the ongoing challenges posed by terrorism in the “Triangle of Death,” Russia has successfully filled the Western gap. In the economic and humanitarian spheres, Russia is working to establish a strong presence similar to that left by Western powers through their organizations. The year 2024 saw a significant Russian influence in Africa, with popular support in the Sahel following political tensions that led to the formation of governments rebuilding alliances with Russia and the Wagner Group, which plays an important role in combating terrorism.

# The Motives Behind President “Ouattara’s” Announcement of the French Troops’ Withdrawal from Côte d’Ivoire in 2025

## Launching of President Ouattara’s Election Campaign:

President Ouattara’s election campaign has begun as part of his preparations for the upcoming elections in Côte d’Ivoire. His political team has started organizing intensive publicity campaigns aimed at strengthening his position with voters. This campaign includes a variety of field and media activities focusing on his achievements during his tenure and his vision for the future, with an emphasis on the continuity of stability and development in the country. Ouattara faces significant electoral challenges, including competition from opposition parties aiming to weaken his political standing.

## Ouattara’s Concerns About a Military Coup Scenario:

President Ouattara’s concerns about the possibility of a military coup have grown due to the political and security tensions in Côte d’Ivoire, as well as in some neighboring African countries that have experienced similar transitions. These concerns relate to the deterioration of the internal political situation, growing public dissatisfaction with the current governments, and the increasing military influence in some African nations. These factors could increase pressure on Ouattara, making him anxious about the possibility of a military coup in the country. The government is addressing these concerns by strengthening security forces and the military, and working on improving the economic and social conditions to ease tensions and prevent further unrest.

## Avoiding the Escalation of Anti-French Sentiment:

France needs to clarify the objectives and justifications for its military presence in Africa and avoid any actions that might be perceived as interference in the internal affairs of African countries. France should offer more support for developmental projects in Africa, rather than focusing solely on security, thus enhancing its image as a true partner contributing to economic and social development. Improving cultural and educational ties with African nations can also help improve France’s image and alleviate anti-French sentiments. It is important for France to listen to the demands of African countries, particularly regarding military presence, and adapt its strategies to align with the aspirations of these nations.

## Reducing Tensions with the Sahel Af- rican Countries:

France could begin by withdrawing part of its forces or reorganizing its military presence in the Sahel in a way that considers the interests of the region’s countries and supports national sovereignty, reflecting respect for African people’s aspirations to maintain their independence. Instead of direct military presence, France could enhance cooperation with national armies and support local capacity-building efforts to combat terrorism through training and technical assistance, without maintaining a large military presence.



# Possible Scenarios for the Future of France-Côte d'Ivoire Relations

## Possible scenarios for the future of relations between France and Côte d'Ivoire



### Escalating Tension and Complete Break:

This is one of the potential scenarios if internal and external pressures on the French government and President Ouattara continue. Several factors could lead to the development of this scenario:

- If popular movements in Côte d'Ivoire continue to express opposition to French influence, particularly in light of security and economic issues, this could lead to an escalation of anti-French sentiment, strengthening calls for the withdrawal of French troops and the cessation of military cooperation.
- The local media in Côte d'Ivoire, especially in times of political or economic tensions, could contribute to fueling anti-French sentiments, increasing pressure on the government to distance itself from its partnership with Paris.
- In the event of a change in political leadership in Côte d'Ivoire, such as the rise of opposition parties more radical in their stance against French presence, tensions could increase, and this new

leadership might take steps to gradually reduce relations with France, potentially severing ties entirely.

### Limited Military and Security Cooperation:

There may be partial agreement in certain areas with a focus on avoiding direct involvement or large-scale military intervention. This cooperation could involve specific aspects, mainly technical support and training, rather than a significant military presence.

### Strengthening Paris' Economic Cooperation with Côte d'Ivoire:

This is an important strategic option for the future of France-Côte d'Ivoire relations, especially amidst political and regional changes in West Africa. France could focus on strengthening its economic ties with Côte d'Ivoire in various sectors, enhancing bilateral cooperation and creating opportunities for sustainable development.



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# Scenarios for 2025

Possible scenarios for the future of relations between France and Côte d'Ivoire withdrawal of French forces from Côte d'Ivoire in 2025

- 1 Commencement of the electoral campaign for President "Ouattara"
- 2 Ouattara's fears of a military coup scenario
- 3 Avoiding the escalation of anti-French sentiments
- 4 Reducing tensions with countries in the Sahel region



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Regarding what 2025 holds for France in the African continent, and based on recent realistic data, the following scenarios seem likely:

## Zeroing of French Presence in the Continent:

By 2025, African countries have taken steps to reduce France's presence within their borders. For example, Côte d'Ivoire's President Alassane Ouattara announced in his New Year's speech in January 2025 the withdrawal of French troops from the country as part of a broader reduction of French military presence in West Africa. According to Reuters, France plans to reduce its forces there from 2,200 to 600 soldiers. In a similar vein, Senegalese President Macky Sall declared the end

of foreign military presence in Senegal starting in 2025. In a decisive step reflecting a break from France, in October 2024, Niger's ruling authorities replaced street names and landmarks with French influences in Niamey with new national and African names, such as changing "Charles de Gaulle Street" to "Gibo Bakari Street" and renaming the French cultural center to "Mustafa Hassan" while also renaming "La Francophonie Square" to "Sahel Alliance," signaling an alliance with Mali and Burkina Faso.



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**A**dditionally, French President Emmanuel Macron's comments during his speech before French ambassadors on January 6, 2025, defending the French intervention in Africa in 2013 to fight extremism, were provocative. Macron sarcastically mentioned that the countries that distanced themselves from French support "forgot to thank us," confidently asserting that thanks would come later. These remarks angered several African nations, with both Chad and Senegal strongly condemning them. Therefore, it seems likely that other African countries, especially those with external interventions and rising anti-French sentiments, such as Guinea, the Central African Republic, and Cameroon, may follow the example set by Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, and Niger in resisting French influence. Macron's recent statements could lead to a deterioration in diplomatic relations and accelerate the process of reducing or eliminating France's presence, encouraging African nations to seek new partners, such as Russia and China.

### **Economic Substitution:**

Economic influence in Africa is undergoing significant changes, influenced by intersecting political and security factors. French economic influence in Africa is expected to diminish in 2025, particularly as many African countries seek to detach themselves from the CFA franc, a currency that serves as a key tool for French economic dominance. France earns billions from the CFA franc, which forces 14 countries to deposit 50% of their revenues into the French Central Bank. Regarding uranium and oil in Africa, 75% of the uranium used in French nuclear reactors comes from Niger, but these African countries receive only 2% of the proceeds from the electricity generated by these resources. Additionally, France has failed to provide sufficient support to African countries burdened with massive debt. For instance, the external debt of Burkina Faso, Chad, and Mali

amounts to \$1.75 billion, \$2.13 billion, and \$1.86 billion, respectively. Thus, African countries are likely to focus on developing local industries, seeking mechanisms to reduce debt burdens with global organizations, strengthening the continent's economy through agreements with the African Continental Free Trade Area, and forming economic partnerships with China, Russia, and India, thereby facilitating an economic shift away from French influence.

### **Re-substitution:**

The re-substitution scenario is ranked last, especially since all indicators suggest that France has failed to establish a lasting presence in the continent. The likelihood that France will attempt to address the causes of its decline is minimal. France may focus on the French-speaking African countries that remain loyal to it in order to avoid repeating the mistakes that led to a break with other nations, aiming to discard the accumulated negative impressions over time. For example, in late November 2024, Nigerian President Bola Tinubu visited Paris for the first time in 25 years, and the visit focused primarily on economic issues, resulting in commitments to establish an "economic partnership" between France and Nigeria. Therefore, France may follow three strategies for dealing with African countries that have severed ties with it: the first is increasing violence and terrorism to pressure governments to return to relations with France, the second is attempting to change hostile regimes, and the third is seeking to restore cooperative relations. It is likely that France will focus on the second option, which is toppling governments hostile to it, while maintaining its relations with French-speaking African countries that remain loyal, with the goal of avoiding the same mistakes that led to the break with other countries and eliminating the negative perceptions that have accumulated over time.





**U**ltimately, French influence in Africa is at a crucial turning point. Africa seems poised for a new era, where the traditional patterns of dominance fade, and African countries assert their sovereignty and independence to serve their people's interests. Meanwhile, France faces an unprecedented existential challenge as its influence wanes in the face of the rise of various global and regional powers seeking to fill the current French vacuum. Between Africa's ambition for independence and the shifting global order, the future of French-African relations hinges on both parties' ability to adapt to the realities of this new era. It is likely that 2025 will mark a pivotal year for African disengagement from French influence, with an expanding circle of nations breaking away from France's sphere.