The French Foreign Presence Declined

Features and Reasons

Investigation Department
Al-Estiklal Newspaper
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Features of the French Retreat Externally:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. 'Barkhane' Retreat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Retreat in North Africa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Decline in Eastern Europe and Armenia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Other threats to French influence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Reasons for the French Decline:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The nature of French foreign policy discourse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Turkish-French conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Introduction**

U.S. President Harry Truman’s disdain for his French counterpart Charles de Gaulle’s request to attend the “World War II” settlements barely came to the minds of observers until he was replaced by another similar scene.

The latest historical scene is also the recourse of current French President Emmanuel Macron at the NATO meeting in June 2021 for US President Joe Biden.

Macron sought Biden’s blessing\(^1\) for the plan to withdraw Turkish troops or Ankara from Libya as an entry point for implementing the vision that the French president could not implement, in the Arab-African country despite generous UAE and Saudi funding\(^2\), and logistical and intelligence support from Egypt and Greece.

NATO’s spectacle followed France’s announcement of its intentions to withdraw from Operation Barkhane in the west of the black continent, giving way to joint international action.

This is where the question began to arise about the effectiveness of French foreign policy with its various instruments of rhetorical and diplomatic soft power, and even its solid military and economic power in supporting the effective international presence of Paris.

France is also questioned about its ability to confront key diplomatic institutions such as the Russian diplomacy with which Paris coordinated, and supported its presence in more than one file, without being able to contain

---

1. RYM MOMTAZ, Macron pitches Biden on plan to get foreign fighters out of Libya. POLITICO, 16 June 2021. [https://politi.co/3cVSfrn](https://politi.co/3cVSfrn)

the effects of its subsequent presence in the West and North African files, leading to the last Financial Coup in early June 2021.

These questions revealed a great deal of room for regression and weakening influence, reviewed by the study, together with the three main factors behind the decline in the effectiveness of French foreign policy, what are the forms of regression? What are its causes?

A. Features of the French Retreat Externally

The diplomatic and military instruments of French foreign policy are experiencing remarkable underperformance, which has had a negative impact on the strength of the French presence in regions such as the Caucasus, West and North Africa, with a clear decline in the French presence in eastern Europe as well.

But it has declined, coupled with a French commitment to the fringes of attendance in the north-east of the Arab region, which is almost the most stable area in terms of French attendance.

What are the features of this retreat? The first focus of this study answers this question.
1. ‘Barkhane’ Retreat:

On June 10, 2021, Macron announced that French military operations against West African “Islamist militants” would end, and that French troops there were now working as part of broader international efforts.³

The decision, made at the level of the Meeting of the French Defense Council on June 9, 2021, while the French president announced that the final touches for the change would be put in place by the end of June 2021, after consultations with America, European countries participating in the region and the five West African Coast countries.

This is the second issue, after the French president reversed a decision on troop cuts after a hypothetical summit in February 2021.

In addition to preparations for the transition from the “command” to the “participation” box, to a complete withdrawal by the end of 2023, France has decided to continue the participation of hundreds of French special forces along with other European countries in the Task Force Takuba, which is fighting militants in the Sahel region, along with the Armies of Mali and Nigeria.

Barkhane is an international counter-terrorism operation involving the Sahel region. The operation began on August 1, 2014, in collaboration with five countries representing former French colonies spanning the Sahel region: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, referred to as the G5 Sahel Group.

Some 5,100 French soldiers were involved in the operation in 2020, after France decided to support them by an additional 600.

During these operations, some 55 French soldiers were killed during clashes with al-Qaeda-linked groups that had captured several cities and towns in northern Mali, about a year before the operation began.

The operation was supposed to be permanent, prompting the French Defence Council to take up a permanent headquarters in the Chadian capital, N’Djamena.\(^4\)

It can be said that the region has an intense presence in France, which runs Operation Barkhane, Turkey, Iran and even Israel, while France has failed to curb the activity of armed groups that have succeeded in controlling about one third of Mali.

Observers, however, consider that the most serious presence is the Russian presence, which should not be assessed on the basis of military support, where Russian companies are active in mining, diamond and gold exploration\(^5\), which are vital on the one hand, as well as the hidden uses of companies in intelligence activities.

The poor return of French efforts was one of the most important reasons for the emergence of strong African opposition to the French presence in particular, as the Malian capital Bamako witnessed demonstrations calling for the recall of Russian troops, reflecting two things: the first relates to the lack of confidence in the Malian army itself, and the second related to the training of coup officers in Russia.

This makes the scene confusing given the second coup in Mali, which was carried out by Colonel Assemi Guetta, particularly after the Malian Constitutional Court legally legitimized the coup leader (the second in less

---


than a year), prompting observers to question the possibility of Chinese-Russian forces replacing French troops in West Africa.

However, the French position reflects several variables witnessed by the West African theatre, which can be summarized as follows:

The vast economic resources spent on Operation Barkhane, whose end or effectiveness do not seem to have any horizon, especially with limited victories by French forces over armed groups in West Africa.

The French themselves were outraged at home, to the extent that the French newspaper Le Monde described its victories as an “illusion.”

This poor effectiveness is accompanied by several questions raised by the French about the feasibility of the French presence in West Africa, which leads to the loss of the lives of French soldiers without decisive results, which has angered the five African countries themselves.

The trend of new coup d’état to negotiate with armed groups, which upset Macron, forced him to suspend the operations of “Barkhane” three days after the coup, and then forced him to announce the gradual French withdrawal from operations in favor of a larger international presence led by America, which was content with the logistical role supporting these operations before. Macron described the situation in Mali as a “coup d’état.”

The French failure has strengthened Russia’s presence in West Africa, as Moscow has done in the east and north of the black continent, leading to
Washington’s high sensitivity to what could be considered a strategic French flop from the U.S. and Turkish point of view.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and French President Macron met on the sidelines of the NATO meeting in June 2021.

Mali’s tension cannot be separated from the declared French position on Islam, which represents the religion of 90 percent of Malians over the Maliki Sunni doctrine, in addition to the strong Sufi presence across the Tijani and Qadiri methods, making his statements about the “crisis of The Islamic religion” a source of undermining the legitimacy of the French presence in this country, and its appearance of invasion.

2. Retreat in North Africa:

The French retreat in West Africa was preceded by a decline in the north as well. This region, which was a vital area for France, and home to a vast external sector of its economic and social interests, is slipping out of its square hands after another, from Tunisia to Libya, through Algeria and Morocco.

But macron’s path in this space seems to be about handing over the flag to America after France’s relative strategic failure to confront Both Turkey and Russia, as well as preserving some of the EU’s interests in combating illegal immigration and counter-terrorism.

What are the features of the French presence in north Africa?

● On the Tunisian issue:
The final days of the former U.S. President Donald Trump's administration have seen Washington's presence in Tunisia enshrined through a 10-year strategic cooperation agreement.

This is a move that means Tunisia is part of the U.S. strategic interest alongside Greece and Turkey, and comes at the expense of France's exclusive presence in the Maghreb.

Tunisia's harvest was a move towards normalization with Egypt, according to Tunisian President Qais Said's visit to Cairo on April 9, 2021, which included discussing Tunisia's move towards a relationship with Israel.

This was translated by Tunisia, later in a huge "Israeli" wheat deal that represents the opening of the deal between Tunisia and Tel Aviv.³

In addition, Tunisia is hosting a U.S. military base in the Sidi Ahmed area of Bizerte province, which includes reconnaissance drones, although Tunisia denies the existence of a base, and the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) has confirmed that Tunisia will not take a springboard for African command operations.⁴

- As for Morocco:

The pace of confirmation of U.S. presence there and the U.S.-Morocco defense partnership are strengthening so far, despite Rabat being the third largest importer of French weapons.

This explains the strong cooperation between the United States and Morocco militarily, to the extent that the relationship amounted to arranging joint

---

exercises called “Lightning Handshake 2021”, near the Spanish-controlled Canary Islands, in what Spain considered a “surprise step.”

The exercises included the participation of the guided-missile destroyer USS Porter and the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower.

This is in addition to negotiations and arrangements towards Morocco’s hosting of the AFRICOM’s main centre, which is still in the German city of Stuttgart, away from the main theatre of operations\(^\text{11}\), which is expected to change soon after France’s move to gradually withdraw its troops from Operation Barkhane.

- As for Algeria:

Algeria has a strong presence on the part of Russian weapons, and Chinese capital comes at the expense of former French influence, while making strong efforts to gain a wide margin of maneuver, away from the full military dependency of any of the major international powers.

The two previous attendees referred to by China and Russia\(^\text{12}\) were based on the ruins of the fragmentation of French influence, dividing it between Russia and China, which puts Algeria, strongly out of French reach today, in the crosshairs of the U.S. diplomatic offensive, which put it on the agenda of the Biden-Putin Summit.

U.S. President Biden, prompted his Russian counterpart Putin, not to equip Algeria with S-400 missiles\(^\text{13}\), which Russia has reserved.

---


The incident was preceded by the direction of U.S. forces to carry out maneuvers to contain the three S-400 systems. Algeria is the third country to deploy the system it acquired in early 2021.

We also note that the sources of concern from Algeria are linked to large-scale military manufacturing operations with the permission of (Russian-Chinese), a number of strategic and tactical pieces, causing concern to the forces of southern Europe, particularly France and Spain.

- As for the Libyan issue:

The French position is shaking up with regard to Paris’s active presence, especially after America resented the growing Russian influence in favor of Franco-Russian cooperation in the Libyan and Armenian files.

This is in addition to the political and security cover provided by the United Kingdom and Italy to Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, son of the late Libyan Colonel Muammar Gaddafi.

Despite France’s insistence on taking out what it calls mercenaries from Turkey and Russia, Macron developed a plan that Biden and Erdogan briefed during his meetings on the sidelines of the NATO summit, but Politico noted that the French plan represents a tactical shift on Macron’s part.

According to the magazine, the French president is taking an approach more closely related to the Western collective movement, but it pointed out that the plan, if successful, would lead to a political victory for someone else, the U.S. president, not France.
The same applies to the recent movements of retired General Khalifa Haftar to the Algerian border, under the cover of counter-terrorism, which could be linked to the French withdrawal from Barkhane.

Haftar’s moves were carried out with a U.S.-French green light and Emirati funding, as well as possible Egyptian operational cover if Turkish forces at al-Watia base intervened against Haftar’s latest move.

However, it is too early to assess France’s current situation in Libya, pending Macron’s final arrangements for operation Barkhane and then the French presence in N’Djamena, a French starting point for Libya.

- In relation to Egypt:

The Egyptian landscape seems a little confused, albeit inclined to reproduce the alliance’s old relations under the pressure of the Renaissance Dam crisis, in which Gulf players seem to have some solution tools.

This explains Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shukri’s visit to Doha, participating in the meeting of Arab foreign ministers who supported Egypt in the face of Ethiopia, and the visit of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to Cairo on an average between Egypt and the UAE, which has seriously stepped towards supporting the dam project during the past period.

Egypt-UAE relations have rekindled the return of old Egyptian alliances, particularly with Egyptian-French naval training earlier this month (June 5, 2021).

---

17 المحرر، خلال اجتماعهم بالدوحة، وزراء الخارجية العرب يشكلون لجنة لمتابعة الأحداث بالقدس ويدعون مجلس الأمن لبحث أزمة
https://bit.ly/3gImlAN
18 المحرر، صحيفة لبنانية تكشف تفاصيل ما جرى بين السيسي وابن سلمان في شرم الشيخ، موقع "قناة العالم" الإيرانية بالعربية.
Bin Salman’s visit also led to a trend toward freezing the Egyptian-Turkish talks, observers say\textsuperscript{19}, and limited them to the initial security level they were before the Turkish exploratory delegation’s visit to Cairo.

This is evidenced by Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis’ visit to Cairo on June 21, 2021, which was one of the most prominent headlines in the Egyptian press as part of its coverage of the visit.\textsuperscript{20}

The visit was immediately followed by a visit to the Libyan capital by Egyptian intelligence chief General Abbas Kamel on June 16th.\textsuperscript{21}

3. Retreat in Eastern Europe and Armenia:

The French retreat was not limited to the African continent alone, both north and west, as there are significant declines in Eastern Europe and the Western Caucasus, which can be summarized as follows:

- Armenia is moving to resolve the Russian and Western presences: according to most observers, the Armenian file is witnessing a trend towards resolving foreign competition in favor of Russia and reducing Western influence, especially the French there.

The Azeri-Armenian war was a first-class confrontation; it was accompanied by a second-class confrontation between Turkey on the one hand and Russia, France and Israel on the other.

It may be too early to resolve the controversy over the decline of The French presence in Armenia, which accompanied the Armenian defeat, as the

\textsuperscript{19} قناة "عبد الحميد العوني"، أردوغان والسيسي، موقع "يوتيوب". 17 يونيو 2021. \textsuperscript{20} وكالات، رئيس الوزراء اليوناني يبحث في القاهرة التطورات الإقليمية والدولية، موقع "مصراوي". 21 يونيو 2021. \textsuperscript{21} وكالات. الكشف عن تفاصيل زيارة رئيس المخابرات المصرية إلى ليبيا، موقع "قناة روسيا اليوم" بالعربية. 17 يونيو 2021.
legislative elections currently taking place reflect a sharp polarization between several political and party figures.

The “Civil Contract” party led by the current Acting Prime Minister and former Prime Minister Nicole Bashinian, and his rival bloc Armenia, led by Robert Kocharyan, who hails from Qara Bagh and served as Armenian President between 1998 and 2008, as well as the first president of the (internationally non-recognized) Republic of “Nagorno Karabakh” between 1994 and 1998\textsuperscript{22}.

The issue of polarization relates largely to the defeat of Qara Bagh and the inability of the Armenian army to fight and relations with Russia, and this last point could lead to the resolution of the electoral confrontation towards it to undermine or stabilize the French/Western presence in Armenia.

• Relationship with Italy:

The eastern Mediterranean file and Libya can be seen as the most important files that France has tried to mobilize the EUROPEAN Union and NATO behind, based on the principle of crystallizing the enemy and representing it in the image of Turkey. Has French diplomacy succeeded in this regard?

The Italian government led by Mario Draghi, who came to power in mid-February 2021, began proving its presence in the eastern Mediterranean by issuing a joint statement with France supporting the planned political process in Libya and demanding the withdrawal of foreign troops.

This did not address the stable formula in Macron’s speech to Libya, which is to “take out mercenaries,” reflecting the difference in Italian vision from its French counterpart on the situation in Libya, in which he explained more than
one position that shows a degree of consensus between Italian and Turkish interests there.

Italy was the third of three forces to meet in Sicily, along with Turkey and the United Kingdom, to discuss a framework for securing the eastern Mediterranean, a move in response to Israel’s "Falcon Strike" exercises near the coast of Libya.

What is remarkable about this meeting, which was held at the level of defense ministers of the three countries, is that he went beyond France and Greece, and wanted to put the consensual and historical interests of the three countries before the eyes of the forces trying to put their feet in Libya.

- Turkey and Eastern Europe:

The game of networking interests in Eastern Europe has been complicated over the past five years, while we need a test in which to measure the performance of French diplomacy in terms of serving its strategy.

While France was on files in North and West Africa, Turkey was able to restore the rift that France had struck NATO, and forged a wide network of interests in Eastern Europe, perhaps with the exception of Bulgaria, which Ankara has conflict relationship with, represented in the Turkish-origin minority in Bulgaria, mainly centered in Slovakia, as well as Austria, which is experiencing a growing anti-Turkish far right.

Despite the need for France, which presents itself as the leader of the European Union and NATO, to strengthen its network of relations with the member states of the two organizations, its strongest European adversary: Turkey has been able to forge strong relations with Romania, Hungary and Poland, as well as with Ukraine, which is today Ankara’s strategic partner and
shared in the formation of an internal NATO axis that included the United Kingdom.

The strength of these relations has reached the point where Turkey is involved in throwing France with statements that carry the meaning of a weak strategic vision, as we will see in turn.

On the other hand, in addition to its purchases of Turkish weapons, Poland participated in an operation to secure Turkey’s southern border along Syria. Ankara, Warsaw and Bucharest are bringing together the “mechanism” of tripartite solidarity.”

In addition to Turkey’s soft power in Hungary through “Tika”, this European country is one of the most important buyers of Turkish weapons, as it is the first EU member state and the sixth member state around the world to select Turkish armored vehicles to meet the needs of its security forces. Hungary has also hired Turkey to form a local space agency.

The Hungarian foreign ministry stresses the importance of Turkey’s role in securing Eastern Europe, and in remarks to Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Zigarto, he said that “an important part of Europe’s security is in the hands of the Turks, whether or not the Europeans like it.”

---


On the other hand, Poland is one of Turkey’s allies in Eastern Europe, and Polish President Andrzej Duda has expressed that Turkey is its closest ally.27 Poland is the first buyer of Turkish vehicles among NATO countries.28

Poland and Ukraine, along with Lithuania, form the so-called “Lublin Triangle”, with which Russian military intelligence maintains Turkey’s relationship as aimed at “containing” Russian influence in Central and Eastern Europe.”29

The relationship between Turkey and Serbia is deepening through joint infrastructure projects between the two countries in particular, the most important of which is the Sarajevo-Belgrade road project, as well as the steady growth of the number of Turkish companies in Serbia and the activity of Turkish soft power there, which is being advanced by archaeological site restoration projects.30

Serbia is also building growing relations with the UAE, which is the agent of the French side in Eastern Europe, and Abu Dhabi’s relationship with the Military Industrial Complex in Belgrade is growing, as well as real estate investments, making Serbia more pragmatic and balanced, which explains its bias towards France during the NATO split.

In the same vein, Turkey operates in Bosnia, the Czech Republic and Croatia, where Turkish soft power, particularly medical, in conjunction with the Corona pandemic appears to be one of the most prominent entrances to deepen its relationship with these countries, as well as infrastructure projects.
The growing relations between Turkey and Eastern Europe are a particular nuisance to France among EU countries.

Despite the tendency of Eastern European countries to balance their relationship with the two warring parties in Europe, Turkey’s growing relations with Eastern European countries have frustrated France’s efforts and pressure within the EU and NATO toward sanctions against Turkey.

This has led to the weakness and laxity of the sanctions that the Union has been forced to impose to appease Paris, after the escalation of pressure from the French-led radicalization front with the membership of Austria, the Netherlands, Greece and Cyprus, as opposed to the front of flexibility comprising Italy and then Germany; and less Spain, as well as the majority of eastern European countries, led by Poland and Hungary.\(^{32}\)

4. Other threats to French influence:

In addition to this decline, there appear to be strong vibrations in France’s position in more than one area, particularly with regard to its situation in Greece, Syria and Iraq.

On the one hand, Greece, which France is exploiting its hostility to Turkey because of the Libya and eastern Mediterranean files, seems to be swinging between showing strong hostility to Turkey on the one hand, and calming tensions between them as it intensifies to approach the brink of confrontation.
This reluctance can be explained by the fact that Greece is a more American strategic theatre than a French theatre, and it has recently evolved to expand Israeli influence in a way that may go beyond French influence.

On the other hand, with regard to the French presence in Syria, U.S. pressure on France has prompted the latter to frame its presence in Syria as part of a new vision of the commitment of the Regime of Bashar al-Assad to a model of permanent settlement.

This does not mean, however, a strong French retreat, as Paris has been one of the main supporters of the establishment of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a vast majority coalition of Kurdish paramilitary forces.

As U.S.-Kurdish relations move downward, following the announcement of the official end of the war against ISIS, France remains trying to maintain its own line with the Kurds.

It is a trend limited by Turkey’s perception of the Kurds as a terrorist threat to its national security, which means that France’s borders are to avoid direct confrontation with Turkey in this regard.

As for Iraq, the French presence depends on the facilities France enjoys at military bases in both Qatar and the UAE.
The French role goes beyond attempts to contain armed groups, in favour of building strong relations with Iraq and its Kurds, whether through arming, training or even timid investments.

It seems to be directed primarily against Turkish influence, and its horizon seems to be governed by several factors, notably the continuing relationship of Gulf fears of the Biden administration on the one hand, and the extent to which France’s relations with Iran have improved on the other.

The mechanisms for cooperation with the Kurdish region in northern Iraq are maximized on the other hand, making the Iraqi theatre vulnerable to political, economic and military rivalry between Turkey and France.
B. Reasons for the French Decline

There are three factors that represent complementary entries to explain France’s apparent relative decline, perhaps most notably with regard to the structure of French foreign policy discourse itself.

In addition to the indignation of France’s allies, particularly America, about Russia’s call in the “heart of the world” region.

The latter manipulated them in Both Libya and West Africa, as well as the most present reason in the international media for the Turkish-French confrontation. Here are the impact paths of these entries:

1. The nature of French foreign policy discourse:

It can be said that this discourse, with its superiority, racism and anti-culturalism, is the main factor behind the decline of the French presence in its spheres of influence, which it considers its vital area.

These regions are generally characterized by a cultural difference from the European civilizational pattern, whether in religion or in social and cultural traditions; and even political, which the leaders of the Middle East states in general try to dress up with tyranny and oppression.

In this context, the fundamental problem lies in the French presence, for which there is hardly a positive mediator except the aspirations of a sector of autocrats, or geopolitical linkages that have a great impact on the timing of the continents of the old world in particular.

A view of the contours of French foreign policy discourse reveals that fact, both from these rhetorical features of the attack on Islam as a religion, not as a pattern of religion.
Attacking the symbols of this religion, first and foremost (The Messenger of God Muhammad (peace be upon him) during the crisis of abusive cartoons and their repercussions, or by attacking the obligatory veil.

Attempts to imitate the imams of tyranny in Arab and African countries through the trend to subjugate the leaders of the French Muslim community, and its pressure to impose the French lifestyle on the Muslim community in France, despite the fact that French politicians have left this society vulnerable to marginalization, discrimination and impoverishment.

The confrontation between Erdogan and Macron over Islamophobia is one of the most prominent features of the deterioration of the relationship between Turkey and France, and even the meeting he brought together on the sidelines of the NATO meeting, which lasted for about 49 minutes, dominated talk of anti-Islamism and French discourse about it.

Macron’s racism is most evident in his Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian’s statement in September 2015 that “Assad is an enemy of only the Syrian people, not the international community,” as if he were entitled to kill Syrians and be friends with the international community at the same time.

The other side of The French Foreign Policy Discourse relates to France’s refusal to take a serious stand against its colonial experiences and the “crimes against humanity” it has left against colonial peoples.

The most notable sign of this was France’s refusal to grant Algeria nuclear waste burial maps during the colonial period, or to apologize for the massacres committed against the peoples of its colonies.

---

39 فريق التحرير، فرنسا والتفارب الروسي.. ماكرون يصطدم بالناتو ويغضب حلفاءه، موقع "ميدان"، 21 يوليو 2020.
https://bit.ly/3jdNEor
The Number of French colonies is about 48 in the Americas, 47 in Africa, 29 in Asia and 23 in the Oceanian region, with six colonies overlooked in Antarctica.

France fears a huge amount of compensation; it relates not only to the victims of mass massacres, but also to an era of corruption that has continued from the departure of French colonialism to the present day in most former colonies.

2. American anger at French external performance disorder:

The contemporary American Empire was based on replacing the ancient empires of its former colonies, imposing a new pattern of political, economic and cultural colonialism away from the direct use of the military instrument.

This does not exempt America from a colonial competitive formula with a number of developed countries, including France, which is experiencing a fierce confrontation with America in North and West Africa in particular, and is now crystallizing in U.S. hostility to expanding Chinese economic influence around the world.

However, the relationship with France has been greatly affected by the increasing pace of cooperative relations with Russia and the leniency of the latter’s military presence in areas with a strong presence of French military influence and mechanisms.

This can be seen in Libya, Algeria and even West Africa, and we have already referred to demonstrations in Mali demanding that Russian forces replace French troops there to confront armed groups.

Mختار الدباسي، التنافس الأميركي الفرنسي على إفريقيا: حرب معلنة، صحيفة "العرب" اللندنية، 18 أكتوبر 2020. 
This French propensity for independence from Western military policy finds an ancient resource: France’s withdrawal from NATO’s unified command during Charles de Gaulle’s rule on March 7, 1966.

Before France returned to the leadership during The Presidency of Nikolai Sarkozy on The 11th of the same month in 2009.

Once again, NATO members’ fears about France are renewed, but this time because of France’s tendency to summon and coordinate with the Russians (in more than one file, led by the Armenian file).

It has maintained a distance between Paris and NATO, which France sees as “Hollande-Macron” as an alliance (Anglo-American), describing it as brain death, declaring that Russia and China are not the enemies, but “terrorism” is the enemy.

France soon called for red lines for Russia, a coup d’état that was either due to pressure from the U.S. administration, or to show Russian manipulation of France, particularly in the West of Africa.

The development in (French-Russian) relations has prompted America to break up a segment of its allied experience with France, which has been starkly reflected in U.S. logistical support for Paris in Operation Barkhane.

“We are spending hundreds of millions of dollars on a French force that is still unable to reverse the scales,” a senior U.S. official told Euronews. “We don’t seem to be getting the fruits of what we spend.”
This seemed to be the turn of America towards halting its financial and logistical support for French troops on the African coast, apparently the entrance to the current French withdrawal from Barkhane.

France’s allies' position evolved after Macron’s remarks about NATO’s brain death, which German and American observers interpreted as a statement due to the Franco-Russian rapprochement that contradicts NATO’s current doctrine.

Italy later joined the criticism after French aid to The Russian-backed Libyan military's Khalifa Haftar to enter the capital Tripoli.

In particular, the African scene, and Russia’s spheres of influence in general, are witnessing Russia’s manipulation of French diplomacy, reinforcing U.S. distrust of Paris’s capabilities and thus the need to re-establish a policy of “replacing it” like the post-World War II period.

3. Turkish-French conflict:

This conflict is one of the most important sources of destabilization of France’s position in its areas of influence in the Arab and African regions.

Turkey’s balanced position between Russia, the United States and the European Union reflected a high level of strategic and diplomatic maturity, enabling Ankara to maintain a balanced relationship with all these entities with minor losses on the West Side.

But it did not make strategic mistakes like France, which was manipulated by Both America and Russia during the clashes in North and West Africa.

What made the French position on Russia seem even more turbulent was the turmoil that accompanied its management of the Barkhane battles, which weakened the effectiveness of the entire operation.

https://bit.ly/3zEQ8r
On the other hand, the escalation with Turkey has led the latter to direct its resources of soft and solid powers to achieve a strategy based on France’s containment and relative replacement.

It is a strategy that has been relatively successful in the Caucasus and in North and West Africa, particularly in Algeria, so that the U.S. will maintain the principle of balancing France and Turkey regionally.

Turkey’s economic strength, despite monetary turmoil, has supported Turkey in the face of France, which has been experiencing a strong growth crisis over the past five years.

On the other hand, the Turkish military force, coupled with the escalation of its military industry infrastructure, supported by a qualitative technical development, and Turkey’s ability to adapt to external crises towards the development of a self-manufacturing structure.

This is in addition to the rise of Turkish nationalism, Erdogan’s leadership in his foreign policy, and the strength of Turkey’s diplomatic apparatus.

All these considerations have led Turkey to reach the edge of confrontation with France and Greece several times in the “Eastern Mediterranean”, an edge from which Egypt and Greece have retreated more than once.

Especially after the impact of the deterrence resulting from the Qara Bagh war, the confrontation with Russia in Syria and France in northern Iraq, and the effectiveness of the Turkish military and technical machine during these confrontations.

All these considerations have undermined France’s standing and diminished the image of the strength of its diplomatic and military mechanisms before Turkey in political forums, notably the European Union and the United Nations.

Also in strategic forums, led by NATO, despite observers’ fears of a possible global confrontation in the Eastern Mediterranean.
Conclusion

France’s widespread retreats and greed in maintaining some footholds, and a shake-up in the performance of its diplomatic and military tools, have led many observers to imagine that Macron’s continued presence in France’s political future is uncertain.

This is in front of an army that aspires to restore the De Gaulle legacy with direct presence at the heart of the political and diplomatic establishment, and in front of a right and even a left that finds in the vibration of the internal performance coveted to attack the French president, and pull the political rug from under his feet.

The weakness of the military machine was manifested in Haftar’s retreats in Libya, the fog of victory led by French forces in Barkhane, and the failure to confront Turkey in Tripoli, Iraqi Kurdistan and even northern Syria.

Also, through the efficiency shown by Turkish special forces in the face of their Russian, French and Israeli counterparts at the Qara Bagh theater, Macron’s conflicting visions of the relationship with both Russia and NATO.

All considerations have led to a loss of confidence in French military capability, and have angered the French military, whose former chief of staff, General Pierre de Villiers, is preparing to run for president of France in the hope of repairing the damage caused by Macron’s policy.

The apparent weakness in the French diplomatic tool is no less than that of the military instrument, especially with the weak ability to garner support in the European Union for France’s foreign policy towards Turkey, Russia and Africa.

Macron has had to bow to Biden, returning strongly to the American interventionist mood on more than one issue, including issues in which
Macron appears to have been disappointed in building a significant alliance with Russia in the Caucasus, West Africa and even the north.

France seems to be working hard today not to make a new loss in external standing, anticipating the arrival of a strong leadership represented by France’s 22nd president in the April 23, 2022 elections, amid an abundance of right-wing candidates, one likely left-wing candidate, and another candidate of military origin.