

From a reinvented partnership to the "Solution Country"

DRC – France in Nairobi: the end of the old African paradigm



Blog Post

⚡ The Nairobi symbol

The Africa Forward summit held in Nairobi in May 2026 was likely more than just another diplomatic event on the international agenda. It may well reveal a much deeper rupture: the gradual demise of the old postcolonial paradigm that had structured relations between France and parts of Africa for decades.

The symbolism is powerful.

For the first time, a strategic summit of this magnitude was held in Nairobi, the Anglophone capital that has become one of the continent's main technological, financial, and diplomatic hubs. This geographical shift already speaks volumes: contemporary Africa no longer sees itself through the old mental boundaries of Françafrique.

The continent has changed. And so have African leaders. In Nairobi, two visions seemed to be in dialogue, albeit from afar.

On the one hand, Emmanuel Macron spoke of a "reinvented partnership." On the other, Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo developed the doctrine of Congo as a "Solution Country." Two different expressions. Two distinct political histories. But the same geopolitical reality remains: Africa is now entering an age of competing sovereignties, strategic industrialization, and control of critical infrastructure.

⚡ The end of the French sphere of influence

For a long time, the Franco-African relationship was based on a relatively stable mechanism:

- ⚡ Networks of influence
- ⚡ Military bases
- ⚡ Security dependencies
- ⚡ Political and economic balances inherited from independence

Emmanuel Macron himself now acknowledges the limitations of this system when he refers to France's "sphere of influence." This statement is far from insignificant. It likely constitutes one of the most important doctrinal shifts ever made by a French president regarding contemporary African policy.

The Sahel has accelerated this realization.

The withdrawal from Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger revealed something deeper than a simple military crisis. The major French bases have gradually lost their political legitimacy in the eyes of a growing segment of African public opinion.

The problem was no longer merely one of security. It was becoming symbolic. Contemporary Africa no longer wants only military partners. It now demands:

- ⚡ Infrastructure
- ⚡ Investments
- ⚡ Industrial capacity
- ⚡ Technology transfers
- ⚡ And greater economic sovereignty

🚩 The Congo as a Solution Country

This is precisely where the Congolese doctrine of the "Solution Country" becomes strategic.

Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo no longer presents the DRC as simply a country rich in minerals. He seeks to reposition Congo as a central power in global industrial transitions. Congolese cobalt is no longer just a mineral. It is becoming a geopolitical asset.

Electric batteries, artificial intelligence, digital infrastructure, energy technologies, and even certain defense industries now depend on resources largely present on African territory—and particularly in Congo.

Africa is gradually ceasing to be a periphery. It is becoming a global strategic infrastructure. And this changes everything.

Because when a continent becomes indispensable to global energy and digital transitions, its status in international power relations automatically changes.

China has understood this. So have the Gulf States. As have Turkey, India, Russia, and the United States.

In this multipolar environment, France can no longer claim to single-handedly manage the balance of power in Africa. It is becoming one actor among many in a much more open global competition.

But the "Solution Country" doctrine goes beyond mere mining rhetoric. The real challenge for Kinshasa is no longer simply extracting resources. It is becoming:

- ⚡ Transform locally
- ⚡ Industrialize
- ⚡ Control value chains
- ⚡ Build infrastructure
- ⚡ And retain more economic value within the national territory

🚩 Governing strategic flows

This is where the speeches of Presidents Macron and Tshisekedi partially converge. Both advocate, each in their own way, the return of the strategic state. President Macron asserts that "we need strong states."

President Tshisekedi defends a state capable of securing resources, organizing investments, and planning national infrastructure. The market alone will not suffice. Contemporary sovereignty now depends on the capacity to control:

- ⚡ Financial flows
- ⚡ Digital infrastructure
- ⚡ Data
- ⚡ Payments
- ⚡ Supply chains
- ⚡ And certification systems

This is precisely where a new generation of African infrastructures is emerging. Resource tokenization, blockchain traceability, sovereign payments, carbon governance, and KYC architectures are gradually becoming major instruments of public power. Digital technology is ceasing to be a mere technological sector; it is becoming an infrastructure of sovereignty.

Architectures like AXIS perfectly illustrate this transformation. African resources are no longer simply exported as raw materials; they are beginning to be integrated into digital systems capable of ensuring:

- ⚡ Traceability
- ⚡ Compliance
- ⚡ Governance
- ⚡ Certification
- ⚡ and local value creation

🌍 Africa is entering the age of sovereign systems

Ultimately, Africa Forward Nairobi 2026 may reveal a much broader reality. Africa is gradually entering the age of systems. The central question is no longer simply, "Who owns the resources?" It becomes:

- ⚡ Who controls the flows?
- ⚡ Who governs the infrastructure?
- ⚡ Who controls the data?
- ⚡ Who organizes the value chains?
- ⚡ And who structures African transaction platforms?

In this new global environment, states capable of building sovereign architectures will possess a major strategic advantage.

Because 21st-century Africa will likely be governed less by traditional territorial logics than by the mastery of invisible infrastructures: payments, connectivity, energy, data, traceability, and artificial intelligence.

The implicit dialogue between Emmanuel Macron and Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo ultimately reveals a much deeper transformation in Africa-Europe relations.

The old vertical relationship is gradually giving way to a negotiation between sovereignties. A less ideological relationship. More competitive. More transactional. And above all, much more strategic.

The transition is obviously still incomplete. France continues to grapple with the weight of its imperial legacy. And African states still need to transform their natural resources into strong institutions, sustainable infrastructure, and real industrial power. But a historic break now seems to be underway.

Between Nairobi and Kinshasa, a more sovereign, more contested, and above all, much more aware Africa is gradually emerging, recognizing its central role in the energy, digital, and geopolitical balances of the 21st century.