

France-Afrique Model: A Declining Relationship

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Abstract

France has started to move away from the France-Afrique model. France's new Africa policy has received mixed reviews from the uncertain Africans as the country has started to move away from the France-Afrique model. While some in Africa appear to have accepted the outlines of the new policy, others have expressed misgivings concerning the replacement of the familiar with the unfamiliar-and some have even pushed away. This has been taking place while the French themselves feel bound to make their own adjustments in both tone and substance, in the meantime continuing to refine their policies and their subsequent implementation with a few notable stumbles along the way.

Keywords: *France, Francophone Africa, France-Francophone Relations, French Post-Colonial Policy, French New Africa policy*

Fransa-Afrika Modeli: Azalan İlişkiler

Özet

Fransa, Fransa-Afrika modelinden uzaklaşmaya başladı ve bu uzaklaşmayı takip eden süreçte Fransa'nın yeni Afrika politikası Afrikalılardan değişik tepkiler almaya başladı. Bazı Afrikalılar değişen politikanın genel çizgilerini benimserlerken, bazıları bilinenin bilinmeyen ile yer değiştirmesine-bilinenin uzaklaştırılmasına dair korkularını dile getirmeye başladılar. Tüm bu gelişmeler Fransızların kendilerini yapmaya mecbur hissettikleri özde ve sözde değişiklikleri yapmaya çalışırken ve gelecek politika ayarlamaları uygulamalarını-tökezleyerek de olsa devam ettirirken meydana gelmekteydi.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Fransa, Frankofon Afrika, Fransa-Frankofon İlişkileri, Fransa'nın Sömürge sonrası Politikası, Fransa'nın Yeni Afrika Politikası*

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is, therefore, to explore French's new Africa policy, one that governed France's relations with sub-Saharan Africa for most of the 20th century. Former Ivory Coast President Houphouet-Boigny coined the phrase 'France-Afrique' to describe the complex web of economic, military, political, social, and cultural ties that linked France with its former colonies and, to a lesser extent, the non-francophone Africa. These ties were built over decades of colonial rule that persisted to the 1960s, providing a mutually beneficial environment for both sides as the Africans benefitted from French protection, including military support and the so-called 'foreign aid' in many other aspects.

From the colonial era to date, the continent of Africa has been deeply influenced by the French in terms of culture and tradition. Some figures even worked in high positions in France. For example, Houphouet-Boigny served in the French government and the Senegalese President, Senghor, rose to the very pinnacle of the French society with his admission to the *academie Francaise*.¹ The African elite and their children studied-and they still do-in France, with the ever-expanding 'francophonie' movement ensuring that they remained part of France's global network. At the other end of the scale, tens of thousands of African colonial troops fought for France during the World Wars and other conflicts, and the veterans still receive pensions for their service to France.² Under the tutelage of succession by President Houphouet-Boigny at the French Presidency, the France-Afrique relation operated well for decades. However, while the advantages of these ties allowed that model to endure for decades, its saliency has weakened as the colonial era grows more distant. This is because the political and economic costs to France backstopping former colonies are harder to sustain. Based on this, while modernizing and normalizing relations with Africa, France is likely to lose her influence in Africa in the long-run.

The End of the 20th Century

Towards the end of the 20th century, the France-Afrique as an effective model began having troubles to adjust to a changing global landscape. Obviously, certain factors are directly or indirectly responsible for the future of France in sub-Saharan Africa. To start with, the old pattern of rela-

1 Tony Chafer, 'Franco-African Relations: No Longer so Exceptional?', *African Affairs*, 2002b, p. 101: 346.

2 Ibid.

tions between France and Africa is no longer understood by the new generations of African people or-for that matter-by public opinion in France. This happens because of the shrinking population of older generations on both sides; the younger generation lack knowledge and experience of the France-Afrique, and are less reflexively inclined to view the relations through that optic. It was the end of the 20th century that Africans began to lose their tendency to look at France as their model. In short, France-Afrique began falling victim as a result of the effects of globalization.

On the other hand, the cost of maintaining relations based on the France-Afrique philosophy is becoming less commensurate with its returns, both in the light of political and economic conditions. France shifted to an all-volunteer military system in 2001, which immediately increased the cost of sustaining a global military presence. As a result, it moved from a strategy of direct intervention to one which favors African-owned processes and indirect assistance instead, eschewing unilateral intervention in the internal affairs of African countries while also retaining agreements previously concluded to defend them from external aggression. Added to the pressure is the European Union (EU) requirements that limit deficit spending, and the country's traditionally generous safety net and an aging population that strains finances. Parallel to these are the booming and resource-hungry economies elsewhere raising the cost of commercial transactions, thus threatening French privilege in Africa. Cost-cutting at home and abroad, naturally, has become a priority for maintaining the qualitative and quantitative investment of the France-Afrique becoming harder to accomplish.

In the recent past, France has caused mischief across the continent; Jacques Chirac's government was aware of the the France-Afrique's stagnation, yet disinclined to do much about it while trying conversely to preserve the same facade. Acting in old style, Chirac-to some embarrassment-gave in to a questionable process with no constitutional arrangements in Togo that led to President Gnassingbe Eyadema's son, Faure Gnassingbe, who wanted to take power in 2005 upon his father's death.³

Again, during the Rwanda's genocide which saw about 800,000 Tutsis slaughtered by the Hutus armed forces, Paris made no secret of where its loyalties lay.⁴ The French military flew in ammunition for the government

3 Lanre Akinola, 'Death of Eyadema: Way Forward For Togolese People', <http://www.socialistnigeria.org/paper/2005/march/10.html>, (accessed: February 5, 2005).

4 Johan Arne, Vetlesen, 'Genocide: A Case for the Responsibility of the Bystander', *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 38, No. 4, 2000, p. 519-532.

forces and, a good number of Hutu officials were allowed to travel to Paris, including Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza, who was later convicted of genocide by the international tribunal, for meetings with the President, François Mitterrand and the French prime minister. Even as the mass graves filled across Rwanda, Paris engineered the delivery of millions of dollars' worth of weapons to the Hutu regime from Egypt and South Africa.⁵

In 1998, a French parliamentary investigation rejected these accusations but admitted that the late President, François Mitterrand and the then centre-right government in France had been blinded by the supposed French interests in the region into siding with radical, and eventually murderous, Hutu groups.⁶

Africa has traditionally been considered such a special case in Paris that France's policy is run out of the presidency. France's president did not deny what had happened, but took a view no less racist: 'In such countries, genocide is not too important'.⁷

Gérard Prunier, a French historian who advised the French government during the later stages of its intervention in Rwanda, characterised Paris's view of its former African colonies not as foreign countries but as 'part of the family'. Paris's African 'back yard', he wrote in a history of the Rwandan genocide in which he made clear his disaffection with French support for the Hutu regime—remains its back yard because all the chicks cackle in French. There is a high degree of symbiosis between French and Francophone African political elites. It is a mixture of many things: old memories, shared material interests, delusions of grandeur, gossip, sexual peccadilloes'.⁸

He added:

'The arch-enemy in this cosy relationship, the hissing snake in the Garden of Eden, is the 'Anglo-Saxon'. Prunier argued that the French govern-

5 'Chris, McGreal, 'France's Shame?', *The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/jan/11/rwanda.insideafrica> Thursday 11 January 2007, (accessed: Thursday 11, 2007); John, Lichfield, 'Sarkozy Admits France's Role in Rwandan Genocide', Paris, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/sarkozy-admits-frances-role-in-rwanda-genocide-1911272.html>, Friday 26 February 2010, (accessed: February 26, 2010).

6 Peter, Uvin, 'Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda', West Hartford, Connecticut: Kumarian Press, 1998, p. 87-96.

7 Gérard Prunier, 'The Rwanda Crisis (1959-1994) History of a Genocide, Londres/Hurst, New-York / Columbia University Press, 1995, p. 326; Gérard Prunier, 'Traduction Française Publiée Aux Editions Dagorno, Paris, Sous Le Titre Rwanda: Histoire D'un Génocide en 1997', Pour des raisons de copyright le titre a ensuite été changé en janvier 1998 en Rwanda: le génocide.

8 Taylor, B. Seybolt, 'Humanitarian Military Intervention: The Conditions For Success and Failure', Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 46-96.

ments viewed 'the whole world as a cultural, political and economic battlefield between France and the Anglo-Saxons... It is the main reason-and practically the only one-why Paris intervened so quickly and so deeply in the growing Rwandan crisis' (Prunier, 1995, p. 326; Prunier, 1998).⁹

However, Sarkozy admitted that French 'errors' had contributed to the Rwandan genocide which killed an estimated 800,000 people in 1994. But he did not formally apologise nor did he accept the allegations that France had played an active role in training and armed the Hutu militias and troops who led the massacres of the Tutsis and moderate Hutus.¹⁰

But he suggested that the entire international community—and France in particular—should accept that its response was culpably weak.¹¹ Sarkozy spoke of the cumulative guilt of the international community, the implication was clear. France was—for the first time—admitting that its own actions had contributed to the calamity.

Previously France has always insisted that it could not have foreseen the genocide and that the intervention of its troops helped to save many Hutu and Tutsi lives. However, Sarkozy's visit to Kigali, and a joint press conference with the Rwandan President, Paul Kagame, were the most dramatic symbols of efforts to repair relations. Diplomatic ties were restored three years after they were severed amid mutual recriminations and allegations.

Similarly, Sarkozy's early success at helping to liberate the Bulgarian medical workers long detained in Libya on dubious charges was another example of such chaos.¹² Another more recent incident, namely, was the Zoe's Ark 'rescue' mission of Darfur children. The revised Africa policy Sarkozy announced after rising to power in May 2007, is now taking shape. In the past, the French government would tacitly or openly tolerate-even support-some of these activities. Now, with a more spontaneous social media and the weakened cover afforded by a deteriorating France-Afrique, these become problems, if not major scandals, that must be addressed in a less sheltered environment. Sarkozy, accordingly, wrought change to the

9 Gérard Prunier, 'The Rwanda Crisis (1959-1994) History of a Genocide', Londres/Hurst, New-York/ Columbia University Press, 1995, p. 326.

10 Gérard, Prunier, 'Traduction Française Publiée Aux Editions Dagorno, Paris, Sous Le Titre Rwanda: Histoire D'un Génocide en 1997', Pour des raisons de copyright le titre a ensuite été changé en janvier 1998 en Rwanda: le génocide.

11 Andrew Wallis, 'France Must Answer for Its Actions in Rwanda', <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2008/aug/07/rwanda.france>, (accessed: March 25 2012).

12 Tito Drago, 'Spain Defends Pilots in Child Abduction Row', Inter Press Service, Pan-African News Wire, Johannesburg, 30 October 2007.

Africa account; his basic approach has been to try to clean the slates, rid relations of the colonial era hangover, and conduct more 'normal and business-like' relations with the African nations. He is quick to attribute events and activities before his presidency to 'past French governments', constantly emphasising that he represents a new era. In fact, he did away with the the France-Afrique policy-at least on paper. The France-Afrique position no longer officially exists under Sarkozy's administration, although he may have Africa advisors who, functionally, report directly to him.¹³

The New Africa Policy

France has close relations with its former African colonies, and would like to prevent a spread of conflict and destabilisation of the region. France received requests from its former African colony, Mali, to intervene in its domestic conflict.¹⁴ Mali's calls were answered with a swift and affirmative response, and France found itself intervening in Africa once again, having been involved in conflicts in Libya and the Ivory Coast in 2011.¹⁵ On 12 October 2012 the United Nations Security Council unanimously, under Chapter VII of the UN Charter passed a French resolution to assist the army of Mali in combating the Islamist militants.¹⁶ This seemed to be at odds with typical French post-colonial policy, especially given that the French have three military bases in the region.

Africa is a region where France has had the deepest impact and operated for the longest period of time. Former president Charles de Gaulle and successive governments have all seen Africa as a 'forward base' to support France's leadership, regard maintaining France's special interests in French-speaking African countries as a core of African policy. Moreover, France's direct economic interests in Mali cannot be underestimated. That's why President François Hollande, who has 'the least interest in Africa', reversed his low-key image and decided to actively intervene in the continent.

13 'France Debates the Need to Move Beyond its Traditional Spheres of Influence', *The Economist*, 13 December 2006.

14 14 Bresler Ines, 'Mali: Why France is Fighting for West Africa', <http://www.theforeign-report.com/2013/02/06/mali-why-france-is-fighting-for-west-africa/>, (accessed: February 6 2013).

15 'International Condemnation for Mali Coup-Africa', *Al Jazeera International*, 4 October 2011.

16 Bradley Klapper, 'US Cuts off Aid to Mali's Government after Coup', *Associated Press*, 26 March 2012; 'Mali Awaits Next Step after President, Coup Leader Resign', *The Daily Star*, 10 April 2012; 'Mali Separatists Send Group to Talk to Protestors', *Voice of America*, May 15 2012.

Of course, France's involvement in Mali is still a risky business. One of the drawbacks of this action is that it brings back memories of the 'African gendarmerie'—France's colonial status. Although France explained its move as a request from the current government, the same request from the president of the Central African Republic, which also faced an offensive from rebels, failed to get help due to France's own interests.

In May 2007, Sarkozy announced a new policy based on transparency, accountability, calculation of interests, and a dialogue among equals. He also sought to strip relations of what he viewed as 'sentimental and historical relics of the colonial era' which had stifled relations and fostered an unhealthy cycle of dependency and paternalism. Sarkozy also wants a fundamental rethinking of the French policy toward Africa. Development aid is now linked to good governance, and not based on historical affiliations, implying that French engagement should go beyond francophone West Africa. In parallel, France is seeking to 'Europeanise' the responsibility for Africa, arguing that the entire continent is a vital challenge for the whole of Europe. In the light of such thinking, the recent EU mission in Chad was a first success while staying in line with the idea to link future deployments of the French troops to the UN or the African Union (AU) mandates.

With his new Africa policy, both sides would henceforth conduct relations crisply, efficiently, and openly. The policy features 'business-like' relations replacing the 'France-Afrique' model, with more expansive roles taken up by the European Union and United Nations, and increased expectations in terms of transparency, good governance, and results on the part of Africans receiving French aid. These aside, the African continent is no longer dependent on French funding—once a major issue and a main source of influence—now, receiving significant sums from the EU, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), with China having become its biggest trading partner. In this way, France has integrated her special bilateral relationship with African countries into wider, more coordinated European ties, allocating its preference to a multilateral agenda.

It is worth noting that before Sarkozy was elected as the President of France in 2007, he had made it clear that he would break away from France's old way of doing business in Africa—a cosy blend of post-colonial corruption and patronage, equally known as the 'Françafrique', that suited a fair few African dictators and French establishments alike. He also made the same point clear during his first visit to the continent. Gradually over the years, Paris has been reducing its presence in Africa in the political, military, and humanitarian spheres, and even the defence contracts and their secret clauses have been progressively renegotiated.

Sarkozy's Visit to Dakar, July 2007

It was at the University of Dakar that Sarkozy delivered the first of the three speeches outlining France's new Africa policy. July 26th, 2007 was a significant date for anyone inclined to understand France's then-Africa policy. On that day, less than three months after his election, Sarkozy delivered a speech at the University of Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar, Senegal, where he presented his vision of Africa and its culture, and how he intended to cooperate with the African nations in the future. His predecessor, Jacques Chirac, was known for being keen on maintaining a close connection with the African leaders and so he claimed for having considerable attachments to the continent. Sarkozy does not deny such a friendship, but the image of Africa that he stressed in his speech differs widely from Chirac's ideas.¹⁷ The Dakar speech is worth examining, because it can be seen as a public introduction to the Africans, of Sarkozy as the new French President and of the policies he planned to pursue.

Sarkozy clearly denies that the idea of progress can exist in Africa and, thus, he implicitly refers to a sort of determinism believing that the world in which African lives, their society, and their cultures exist do not enable them to improve their life. He assumes that is the reason why these countries have to cope with so many obstacles on their way to development. The concept of such determinism is reinforced by his belief that the African Golden Age never existed, implying—perhaps—that Africa has never been at the same level as Europe, or other developed regions, even before the continent was colonized.

In the Dakar speech, Sarkozy remarked:

I did not come to erase the past, which can not be erased. I did not come to deny either the faults or the crimes, for there were faults and crime....I have come to propose, to the youth of Africa, not to have you forget this tearing apart and this suffering, which cannot be forgotten, but to have you overcome and surpass them.... Africa bears its share of responsibility for its own unhappiness. People have been killing each other in Africa at least as much as they have in Europe....Europeans came to Africa as conquerors. They took the land and your ancestors. They banned the gods, the languages, the beliefs, the customs of your fathers. They told your fathers what they should think, what they should believe, what they should do. They

17 Thomson Alistair, 'Analysis-Sarkozy Seen Shifting, not Severing Africa Ties', <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2007/07/30/france-africa-sarkozy-idUKL3082349820070730>, (accessed: July 7, 30, 2007); Dibussi Tande, 'In His Own Words: Revisiting Nicholas Sarkozy's University of Dakar Speech', <http://www.dibussi.com/2007/09/in-his-own-word.html>, (accessed: September 17, 2007).

cut your fathers from their past, they stripped them of their souls and roots. They disenchanting Africa'.¹⁸

He further added that the colonists:

'Took, but I want to say with respect that he also gave. He constructed bridges, roads, hospitals, dispensaries, schools. He rendered virgin land fertile, he gave his effort, his work, his knowledge. I want to say here that not all the colonists were thieves, not all the colonists were exploiters...Colonization is not responsible for all of Africa's current difficulties. It is not responsible for the bloody wars Africans carry out with each other. It is not responsible for the genocides. It is not responsible for the dictators. It is not responsible for fanaticism. It is not responsible for the corruption, for the lies. It is not responsible for the waste and pollution...The problem of Africa, and permit me as a friend of Africa to say it, is there. The challenge for Africa is to enter more into history. It is to draw from within itself the energy, the strength, the desire, the will power to listen to and to espouse its own history. The problem of Africa is to stop always repeating, to stop always trotting out, to free itself from, the myth of the eternal return, to understand that the Golden Age, which Africa never stops longing for, will never come back because it never existed'.¹⁹

The French President stated that the Africans needed to become more self-reliant, less dependent, and to take charge of their destinies without raising 'colonialism' and its ills as the continuing source of their problems or as excuses. The Dakar speech includes apologies for France's colonial past, and also suggested that African nations needed to acknowledge that they also yielded benefits from the colonial period.

The First EU-South Africa Summit, Cape Town, July 2008

The South African President, Mbeki, one of the few African leaders to react favorably, wrote to Sarkozy:

'What you have said in Dakar, Mr. President, indicates to me that we are fortunate to count on you as a citizen of Africa, as a partner in the protracted struggle to achieve the renaissance of Africa within the context of a European renaissance and the rest of the world'.²⁰

18 Ibid.

19 Olivier Barlet, 'Achille Mbembe's Response to French President Nicolas Sarkozy's Dakar Speech', <http://talatu-carmen.blogspot.com/2007/08/achille-mbembes-response-to-french.html>, 8 August 2007, (accessed: August 8, 2007).

20 Africa, 'France's Changing Policy Towards Continent', <http://allafrica.com/stories/201012170885.html>, (accessed: December 17, 2010).

Analysts from Senegal said they hoped the visit signalled Sarkozy's appreciation for the important relationships between France and Africa.²¹ Relaunching French diplomacy with a bang, Sarkozy pledged a break from Paris's close, and sometimes shadowy, ties with Africa, but to many Africans his words and actions show little has changed.²² Some Africans welcomed Sarkozy's speech as a reality, while others claimed that his call for a less paternalistic relationship was delivered in a distinctly-paternalistic and condescending manner. During his campaign, the President's trip to the sub-Saharan Africa was widely criticized for controversial statements about Africa and immigration. The speeches along with the outlines of the new policy were received with varying degrees of acceptance, with many African critics viewing it as belittling and parent-like-exactly the same two aspects of the France-Afrique model he wished to banish. Prominent Africans faulted Sarkozy's ideas, including the then-African Union (AU) Commission Chairperson, Konare, who said: 'This speech was not the kind of speech we were hoping for....It reminded us of another age, especially his comment about peasants'.²³

Konare was referring to a passage that critics found especially demeaning:

'The drama of Africa is that the African man has not entered enough into history. The African peasant, for millennia, lives with the seasons, where the ideal life is to be in harmony with nature, and he knows only the eternal recycling of time marked by the rhythm of repetition without end of the same gestures and the same words. In this imagination, where everything always recycles, there is no place for either human adventure or for the idea of progress'.²⁴

The EU-Africa Summit, in Lisbon, Portugal, February 2007

The Lisbon speech delivered at the EU-Africa Summit on December 8, 2007 stressed the importance of a strong Europe working with a strong Africa. The centerpiece of the Cape Town speech was Sarkozy's plan to change France's military posture in Africa. Sarkozy's Africa policy intends to 'normalize' relations with the continent and to make them more trans-

21 Africa Confidential, Vol. 43, No. 24, 2002, p. 5-6.

22 Gérard Bossuat, 'French Development Aid and Cooperation under de Gaulle', *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 2003, p. 431-456.

23 Tony Chafer, 'Franco-African Relations: No Longer so Exceptional?', *African Affairs*, Vol. 101, 2002b, p. 346.

24 Tony Chafer, 'Chirac and 'la Francafrique: No Longer a Family Affair', *Modern & Contemporary France*, Vol. 15 3, No. 1, 2005, p. 7-23.

parent while holding the Africans to certain standards of accountability and responsibility and bringing to an end the old model's long cycle of dependency and paternalism. Similarly, the French are seeking to increase the EU and United Nations (UN) engagement in Africa as another form of burden-sharing, and to allow France to operate directly behind the cover of the EU and the UN—two establishments involved in the recent years in different processes, from elections support in a number of places, to military presence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Chad, and the Central African Republic (CAR).²⁵

A degree of success was obtained through lobbying the EU members and some non-members to deploy the European Union Force (EUFOR) in Chad and the CAR, although this deployment required the French to provide more troops and equipment than originally desired. Despite all odds, this was a significant political milestone in the eyes of the French, and the case of EUFOR may very well represent the way the French will try to engage the EU in the event of future crisis. The French even ventured further by depicting the case as an EU and-not solely French-activity. The possible transformation of the EUFOR into a United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO) would also be consistent with the French authorities' desire to increase the UN's role in crisis management, a process that has also worked in Ivory Coast with the linkage established between the French Operation Licome and the United Nations Operation in Ivory Coast (UNOCI).²⁶

Policy as a Reflection of Personality

The new Africa policy, a break with the past, indicates the shelving of relations which previously based on history and sentiment; it is a call for rationalizing relations and having them to reflect the shared interests of equals as well as insistence on transparency and accountability. The desire to work constructively in Africa with countries such as the United States, the EU, and the UN to a large extent appears to be a reflection of Sarkozy himself, who came in a hurry to initiate the reformation. In terms of foreign affairs, however, the French President enjoys a free hand. In some ways, the France-Afrique model was an institution waiting to be changed. Previous French leaders talked about transforming France's relations with

25 Rachel Utley, 'Not to do Less but to do Better. . . : French Military Policy in Africa', *International Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 1, 2002, p. 129–146.

26 *Ibid.*

Africa, while Sarkozy is doing significantly more than that, at least from today's vantage point.²⁷

Upon a clean detachment from French traditions, he has become the first French President to have grown up without first-hand or meaningful personal experience with the colonial era and is, therefore, free of sentimental attachment to the old model. To Sarkozy, the France-Afrique stands to no longer makes sense, with both sides needing to modernize their ties that would be based on a calculation of interests-which, in Sarkozy's view for the French, boils down to 'reward the good, and punish the bad'-thus setting a new and more transparent agenda in terms of how to approach and deal with politicians across the continent.

The Challenges of the New Africa Policy

As the French vision of Africa seems to be evolving, so are new trends emerging in the political relationship between Paris and its former colonies. When Nicolas Sarkozy tells his African audience in his Dakar speech that no one will decide for them, and that their future is in their hands, he questions his own commitment to development in Africa. Even though the concepts of autonomy, ownership, and adaptation to the local context are fair and central in fostering progress without unduly applying methods and doctrines from the North, the President appears to use such concepts to justify a lower commitment to, or even disinterest in, such progress.

It is difficult to determine whether less commitment from France will result in a weaker position for Africa, or, on the contrary, a way of emphasizing the need for Africa to build its own capacities. For donor countries or former colonists like France, finding the right orientation for its technical and political cooperation strategy has always been a major issue. The challenge of determining a balance between committing to Africa's development and keeping the required safe distance to avoid resonating any neo-colonialist behavior, is perhaps still lying ahead in the case of France. This could be a reason for the indecision, or even contradictions, such as the claim to promote cooperation on equal terms while the Dakar speech, in contrast, stresses the difference between Europe and Africa.

²⁷ 'Franco-South African Dialogue: Sustainable Security in Africa Presents the Proceedings of a Seminar on Security in Africa: French and South African Perspectives', jointly organised and hosted by the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD), the Institut Français d'Afrique du Sud (IFAS) and the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) on 18-19 April 2000 in Pretoria.

Yet, there are other, more specific challenges that France and Africa are facing. The most prominent element is probably the African attitude to the "special relationship".²⁸ While the current French administration seems to take distance, some crises reveal that external factors might also jeopardize the relationship. These set aside, France is not the only country in the globe to build, or maintain, firm ties with Africa. In November 2006, the first China-Africa summit was organized on a model similar to that of the traditional France-Africa summits. China's presence has been increasing in intensity both at the economic and diplomatic levels; according to Philippe Leymarie, this country is now the first provider of goods and services in the Sub-Saharan Africa.

It is common for Western media and scholars to attribute the development of the China-Africa relationship mainly to the Chinese demand for resources, in particular energy resources.²⁹ However, this explanation neglects a number of facts. China's Africa policy transcends a mere quest for resources. While China's growing need for raw materials and energy is important to the country's engagement in Africa, it is certainly not the only, nor the key, factor. Rather, to understand China's policies and motivations on the African continent, it is critical to take a broader view that integrates China's overall diplomatic strategic pursuits which focus on China's global position, its striving for the sustainable development of its economy and need for political support on the important issue of Taiwan reunification and the prevention of secessionism.

In terms of China's political and security interests, curbing Taiwanese independence was the predominant focus of Sino-African relations from the late 1980s until the early 1990s. A strong relationship played an important role in responding to Taiwan's so-called 'flexible diplomacy', and in opposing their drive for 'one China, one Taiwan'.³⁰ At that time, it is believed that China's main interest in Africa was to prevent the Taiwan authorities from making trouble (for China) by taking advantage of the small countries there.³¹ However, over time, Taiwan and reunification declined

28 McKinnon, R. Charlton, and Roy May, 'What a Difference a Year Makes:...Under Chirac', *Bulletin of Francophone Africa*, Vol. 5, No. 10, Winter 1996/97, p.93-111.

29 Esther Pan, 'Q & A: China, Africa, and Oil', *New York Times*, January 18, 2006, http://www.nytimes.com/cfr/international/slot2_011806.html?pagewanted=print, (accessed: January 18 2006). Alex Vines, 'The Scramble for Resources: African Case Studies', *South African Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Summer/Autumn 2006).

30 Czeslaw Tubilewicz, 'The Baltic States in Taiwan's Post-Cold War 'Flexible Diplomacy'', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 54, No. 5, 2002, p. 791-810.

31 Yan Xuetong, 'Analysis of China's National Interest', Vol. 2, Tianjin People Press, 1997, p. 114.

as the national strength of the Chinese mainland continued to grow and the diplomatic sway of Taiwan decreased. At present, only five African countries, namely Malawi, Swaziland, Sao Tome and Principe, Gambia and Chad maintain so-called 'diplomatic relations' with Taiwan.

The dominance of Taiwan in Sino-African relations continues to decline while Africa is playing an increasingly important role in China's efforts to deal with nontraditional security threats. Following 9/11 and the outbreak of SARS in 2003, terrorism and the spread of deadly diseases have been given much more attention globally. These and other nontraditional security issues such as small arms smuggling, drug trafficking and transnational crime have all become very important and are documented as part of future China-Africa cooperation.³² In 2006, an agreement was concluded between China and several African governments on judicial cooperation, extradition and the deportation of criminal suspects. The agreement included a Chinese promise, as part of an eight step plan to build a strategic partnership with Africa.³³ This is evidence of other nontraditional security cooperation.³⁴

With regard to fighting terrorism, China and Africa have begun an Exchange of intelligence as well as joint training programs in many African countries. Addressing threats of nontraditional security have enhanced China's consultation and cooperation with African countries in concrete ways and will take center stage in the security interests of Sino-African relations in the era of globalization. China's Africa policies are also driven by the need to sustain China's economic development. With a population of 850 million, Africa has immense human resources and large (actual and latent) markets that are a natural attraction for China. Tapping these markets would tremendously benefit China's own development as well as that of Africa. To maintain the momentum of economic growth brought on by more than 20 years of opening up and reform, China must expand markets for its domestic industry. The profit margins of Chinese enterprises are under increasing pressure with rising competition (partly due to overproduction) and limited demand in the domestic market. This is especially acute in the areas of home electrical appliances, light industry products and mechanical and electrical products, which are precisely those goods in

32 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation-Addis Ababa Action Plan (2004-2006) and China's African Policy, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t230615.htm/>.

33 'China, Africa Vow Closer Cooperation in Fighting HIV/ AIDS', Xinhua News Agency, November 5 2006.

34 'President Hu's Arab-African visit fruitful: FM', Xinhua News Agency, April. 30 2006; and 'Premier's tour heats China-Africa ties', Xinhua News Agency, June 17 2006.

demand in African nations. Africa currently has a lower industrial capacity, creating the need for imports from China, which has a strong manufacturing base. In the recent past years, the structure of China's exports to Africa has shifted to electromechanical and high-tech products, accounting for 53.8% of the total exports to Africa, reflected by China's own rising level of technology manufacturing.³⁵ This complementarity between China and Africa is important to the sustainable development of both the Chinese and African economies. Thus, in spite of still quite prosperous bilateral relations with its former colonies, France needs to face an emerging political and diplomatic competition.

In the case of China, the quality of investments has benefits to economic and social developments. For instance, more job opportunities are created, and the threat of such cooperation can easily be shifted into a new kind of dominance; what's more, the volume and growth of China's economy and its capacity for investment may induce numerous African countries into reinforcing their link with Beijing.³⁶ All the more since China, so far, has not voiced any concern on possible democratic flaws in certain African regimes—a major distinction from France, which has since the independences, maintained a political connection, even at times intensely influencing local politics. Let this not be forgotten that, in some of its interventions, France was accused of undermining democracy and supporting authoritarian regimes. According to François Lafargue, democracy in Africa has never been a priority as compared to political stability and security, which is why the constitution of a strong state power was advocated.

During the 24th France-Africa Summit in 2007, Jacques Chirac hinted at the need to respect national sovereignty, that is, to support actively or passively, the current regimes against armed movements. Difficulties arise, of course, when the concerned government is not legitimate, or at times when democracy is clearly thwarted. For this reason, stability and partial democracy were preferred by politicians to systematic pressures for advanced democracy. Fighting against corruption was not an imperative matter, either. In July 2008, several heads of African states were sued by a group of citizens from Gabon and Congo, with the support of transparency international, regarding the acquisition of real estate and financial capital. This kind of cases can prove very embarrassing for France, given its past support to some of these leaders.

35 'China Commerce Yearbook 2006', Ministry of Commerce of China, p. 724.

36 Zhang Hongming, 'La politique africaine de la Chine', published by the Centre d'étude d'Afrique noire (CEAN), Bordeaux, 2000, and Jiang Chung-lian, 'Le pétrole, nouvelle dimension des relations sino-africaines', *Géopolitique africaine*, No. 14, Spring 2004.

In fact, corruption and personal links have often been referred to by Nicolas Sarkozy and his government as the main element to eradicate in the French African policy. As Jean-Marie Bockel said in January 2008: 'One of the first obstacles to development is bad governance, the wasting of public funds, the negligence of flawed administrative structures, the predation of certain leaders'.³⁷ However, this attitude seems to have appeared as a justification for less commitment to cooperation with Africa. Indeed, an opposite idea appears in the same speech when Mr. Bockel points out that 'peace and security are pre-requisites for development'.³⁸ These views are presented as two equally-true facts, sapping the coherence of the African policy laid out in the speech. The insistence on democracy being the main concern, even a condition for aid to be extended by France, brings a form of rigidity that can disrupt healthy diplomacy. Due to this, Mr. Sarkozy's highly moral speech in Dakar and Mr. Bockel's very technical language, did not appear to promote mutual confidence and cultural proximity in order to be in a better position to press for political development. Instead, their statements target the whole diplomatic relationship, rather than aiming at specific malfunctions in the system, in order to progressively improve it.

Such evolution may also be observed in the advancing shift from bilateral relations to multilateral relations, what is not new, but the movement continues today. In order to maintain significant influence in Africa, France seems to rely partly on the EU through technical cooperation in the form of organising EU-Africa summits, ones which complement, in a way, the same France-Africa summits. Bilateral relations will probably still prevail in the near future, yet a slow shift can be observed from the historical France-former colonies relationship towards a link between France and multilateral organizations on the one hand, for example, the EU, the UN, and the entire Africa on the other. Supporting this belief is the fact that South Africa and Kenya are significantly becoming fervent partners of the French Development Agency (AFD).

Some of the evolutions in the French-African relationship may be long-term ones and, at times, initiated by previous administrations as other,

37 'US Embassy Cables: Nicolas Sarkozy's Personal Diplomacy in Africa is Hamfisted', Wednesday, August 13 2008, 17: 08 CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 01 OF 07 PARIS 001568 SIPDIS EO 12958 DECL: 08/13/2018 TAGS PREL, PINR, ECON, MARR, PHUM, XA, FR SUBJECT: FRANCE'S CHANGING AFRICA POLICY: PART II (FRENCH IMPLEMENTATION AND AFRICAN REACTIONS) REF: PARIS 1501 Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Kathleen Allegrone, 1.4 (b/ d).

38 'Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy Rapporteur: Mr Jean-Marie BOCKEL', France, EPP/CD.

short-term ones. Nonetheless, the firmness of Nicolas Sarkozy's positions on issues related to aid for development and technical cooperation will probably affect Africa in major ways. In fact, the new attitude of France, the apparent rejection of personal connections, corruption, and cultural proximity, might be as harmful for Africa's development as for France.

To overcome, rehabilitating friendship and enhancing France's commitment to fighting both poverty and corruption will be a crucial challenge to keep fruitful cooperations alive. Over a year into Sarkozy's five-year tenure, his African policy has yielded positive results for both the French and the African nations; however, it has not been the clean sweeping 'out with the old, in with the new' success he was first seeking. He appears to have underestimated the scope of the challenge, and overestimated his own abilities as a relative outsider bringing his dynamism to the task. However, Sarkozy has failed to consider some of the dynamics developed over decades of implementing the France-Afrique model; his pace and rhythm, and this is aside from his policies, have not been in tune and accordance with that of his many African counterparts. In openly stating that he was aiming to end the France-Afrique, Sarkozy inadvertently gave it a new spark of life. Nonetheless, it deserves due consideration that the energy that Sarkozy has been imparting stands in favorable contrast to the stagnation characterizing the African policy during the final years of Chirac's presidency. Yet, Sarkozy's main shortcoming in that respect may be that, in his haste to end an admittedly dysfunctional policy, he launched himself into doing so without having completely integrated the lessons that were to be learned from it.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to describe the "France-Afrique" model that governed France's relations with the sub-Saharan Africa for most of the 20th century, while analysing *Sarkozy's new African policy*. Even before taking power in May 2007, Sarkozy believed that relations need revision in response to globalization, changing circumstances, and the waning of the colonial and immediate post-colonial periods. Unlike most of the successive French governments, Sarkozy is a formidable political force, who is trying to promote new relationships between France and the continent of Africa. To do so, he must overcome the inertia and a certain level of comfort on both sides accumulated over many years. As in other areas of French policy, he seems determined to move forward, and has already taken his first steps in that direction. This is a positive development, for

France-Afrique was becoming an increasingly creaky, costly, and potentially dangerous vehicle for dealing with a continent rife with challenges, and well beyond. Seemingly, Nicholas Sarkozy has been doing nothing different from other world leaders by bringing along a group of executives keen on signing deals. For all of France's recent attempts to disengage itself from its past with regards to Africa, the roots of its relationships still run deep. The France-Afrique is changing, yet this is due to the emerging domestic middle classes and civil societies demanding increasing openness from their leaders-and, certainly, not because of France. Here, transparency is the opponent; many Gaullist and Socialist politicians, along with their African allies, are likely to find their campaign coffers out of pocket if things changed for the better. This paper concludes that, against all such odds, Sarkozy has energetically represented France in Africa, and has cast himself as a modernizer, championing a clean break with his country's traditional ruling elite.

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