



**FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY IN AFRICA:
BETWEEN PRÉ CARRÉ AND MULTILATERALISM**

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1 INTRODUCTION

“Africa is a real opportunity for France. It broadens both our horizon and our ambition on the international scene. It is true in the diplomatic, economic and cultural context.”

Dominique de Villepin, 18 June 2003¹

France’s monopoly of Africa is under threat. The last 50 years have seen the French battling to hold on to the ‘privileged relationship’ with their former colonial empire, and a number of factors have forced the once imperial power into redefining its affiliation with ex-colonies, such as new laws on aid distribution, the integration of the EU and modern economic reforms.

In the post-Cold War era, ‘multilateralism’ has become the latest political buzzword, and in its wake a notable shift in French policy in Africa has emerged. This shift, combined with a new generation of French politicians claiming to herald a fresh approach, might suggest that changes are on the way.

As this paper will discuss, however, France has been reluctant to adapt. Certain members of the French elite have benefited from neo-colonial models and are in no hurry to normalise dealings; it’s instructive, therefore, to examine what adjustments have come out of multilateralism and if a new class of politicians really can bring about change.

¹ Addressing the French national assembly during his term as foreign minister.

2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

To understand why a fresh approach is needed, it's important to explore how France's African policies have evolved over the last 50 years.

At the end of the Second World War, one of the reasons France was able to claim a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council was its colonial empire.² With African independence this position could have been threatened, thus France developed a neo-colonial strategy towards its former colonies.³ At the moment of official decolonisation in 1960, General De Gaulle offered, and in some ways imposed, a package that tied France to the new states: newly established African regimes were to remain under Paris's protection. France would provide technical, military and financial assistance; in return the countries involved would back France's international policies.

As a result, all subsequent leaders have had a vested interest in the continent. As the head of state and army chief, the French president has the privilege of conducting foreign affairs. For a leader wanting international recognition, where better to begin than in Africa, where France holds such considerable influence?

French policies toward Africa are inevitably determined by the president's personal inclinations towards the continent. Jacques Chirac, like his predecessor François Mitterrand,⁴ sees Africa as fertile ground – a way to make his mark. However, implementing many of his ideas has not been easy. For a large part of his term, Chirac was unable to impose his stance due to power-sharing with a socialist government.⁵

² In 1945, France's empire in Asia was comprised of Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and five ports in the Indian peninsula, including Puducherry. The African portion was the most important, and included Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Cameroon, Benin, Gabon, the Central African Republic, Djibouti, Madagascar and the Comoros Islands. In the Middle East, Lebanon and Syria were under the protection of the French Republic.

³ In the fight against the spread of communism worldwide, France was put in charge of francophone Africa. It also justified some military interventions, secret or not, in African countries.

⁴ 'Mitterrand et l'Afrique', *Politique Africaine*, n°58, June 1995.

⁵ McKinnon, R. Charlton, R., May, R. 'What a Difference a Year Makes: France and sub-Saharan Africa under Chirac', *Bulletin of Francophone Africa*, Vol.5, n°10, Winter 1996/97, pp.93-111.

The concept of power-sharing or ‘*cohabitation*’ arose in 1986, and is a recurrent political phenomenon in France.⁶ As President Chirac discovered, it alters the way foreign policy is introduced.

Constitutionally, it is the president who has the final say in diplomacy and defence issues, but it is the prime minister who nominates the ministers in charge of implementing the decisions. By selecting the foreign and finance ministers, the prime minister can effectively relegate the president to a secondary role.⁷

This combination of influences can have a significant impact on French foreign policy-making, particularly when interests conflict. Because a consensus is required, important decisions are made by the lowest common denominator. In African affairs this has affected the CFA franc’s devaluation, the Rwandan disaster,⁸ and, during President Chirac’s term, the 1999 Côte d’Ivoire crisis.⁹

Since 2002, however, President Chirac has been free to institute his own policy ideas. In 2003, he used the word ‘partnership’ to describe this new orientation,¹⁰ which was to replace the system of ‘*assistance*’, and in the same speech he also renewed the concept of democratic conditionality.¹¹ Of further significance was the promise to continue with a multilateral approach whereby France gives its support to

⁶ Since 1986 France has experienced three periods of power-sharing between socialists and conservatives: 1986-8 (Mitterrand/Chirac), 1993-5 (Mitterrand/Balladur), and 1997-2002 (Chirac/Jospin).

⁷ Cohen, S. ‘Cohabiter en diplomatie; atout ou handicap?’, *AFRI*, Vol. IV, 2003. The prime ministers and presidents try to impose themselves on issues that are important to public opinion during the pre-electorate period.

⁸ Cohen, S. Op. cit., p.349. Edouard Balladur was sceptical about the pro-Habyarimana policy of François Mitterrand. He fought to impose an international intervention in Rwanda. Even if he did not obtain it, he succeeded in limiting Operation Turquoise to the southwest of Rwanda and showed his determination by visiting Operation Turquoise’s troops.

⁹ Cohen, S. Op. cit. Chirac had to accept the new socialist concept for non-military intervention in African internal affairs. During the 1999 Ivorian Christmas coup against President Henri Konan Bédié, France did not intervene.

¹⁰ Chirac’s speech during the 22nd France-Afrique summit in Paris: “... *the relationships with African states, with the whole African continent, are relations which, today, are going out of the assistance system to enter into the partnership system. What is the partnership? It is reciprocity enrichment; it is a relation from equal to equal, that every partner builds with the acknowledgment of his rights and duties, in responsibility, with reciprocal obligations. It is a new way in which we engage with an immense hope and that not only concern this or this African states but all the relationship between France and Africa.*”

¹¹ Chirac’s speech during the 22nd France-Afrique summit in Paris: “*Second principle, it is democracy. At Yaounde, we underlined the capital importance of the democracy progress, of the Law State progress as well of the tight link between democracy and development. (...) And France, in its concern, wants to accompany, encourage, reinforce this movement and not dictate it. It wants to be close to the African states and with them, hand in hand, on this way.*”

African regional organisations,¹² thus giving rise to the conclusion that Chirac's focus really does appear to be on Africa's development.

¹² Chirac, 2003: *“France does not want to lock itself in an exclusive relationship with Africa, which had its utility but was from another time. It wants to work with regional organisations, back their efforts, conscientious that regional integration is a reality which it is the only one that allows progress towards peace and development”*.

3 PUBLIC AID FOR DEVELOPMENT

Aid policies may have existed for almost 40 years, but the continent has still struggled with development; aid has merely maintained the states' minimal capacity. Whilst France has been a significant contributor to the region, it can be argued that French leaders have used African aid distribution for their own benefit, both as a political and marketing tool to drive forward and apply certain policies. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, a massive part of available funds was relocated from Africa to Eastern Europe. However, since 2003, public development funding has once again increased, reversing the trend of the 1990s.¹³ Today, French policy aims to combine 'trade and aid'.¹⁴

The bodies and institutions in France's official development assistance mechanism were modernised in the late 1990s. In 1998, the cooperation ministry was incorporated into the foreign ministry.¹⁵ In 2005, this brought about an institutional financial reform: the LOLF.¹⁶ French officials wanted to simplify the way in which aid was organised, so they used the United States' only development body (USAID) as one of their models. As a result, the Inter-Ministerial Committee for International Cooperation and Development (CICID) was founded.¹⁷ The CICID decides priority areas for France's official development assistance. In a more general way, it also sets France's policy in terms of cooperation. Meanwhile the definition, management and monitoring of France's bilateral cooperation are concentrated in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economy and Finance. On 20 July 2004, the CICID reaffirmed the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in terms of the strategic management of official development assistance.

France no longer wishes to deal with Africa by itself. Multilateral aid now has priority over bilateral aid, even if the latter still represents around 70% of the global French

¹³ Gabas, J-J. *L'aide publique française au développement* (Etudes de la Documentation Française: Paris, 2005) p.28.

¹⁴ Gabas, Op. cit. p.23.

¹⁵ This ministry had the same function as the current Department For International Development (DFID) in the United Kingdom.

¹⁶ '*Loi Organique relative aux Lois de Finances*'. This bill was applicable for all French institutions.

¹⁷ Created by Decree no. 98-66 of 4 February, 1998. http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/france-priorities_1/development_2108/french-policy_2589/institutional-mechanism_2682/the-inter-ministerial-committee-for-international-co-operation-and-development-cicid_2683/cicid-may-2005_2685/index.html

aid budget,¹⁸ and French funds are increasingly incorporated in the European Union's aid system and international financial institutions. Since 1993, good governance has become one of the prerequisites for receiving French aid. Paris has followed the 'Doctrine of Abidjan' announced by former Prime Minister Édouard Balladur. To obtain aid, African governments have to sign an agreement with the IMF. France was forced to make this change after European partners refused to carry the CFA franc in the Euro zone, and international financial institutions stopped funding over-indebted French-speaking Africa. However, it has helped to normalise the financial relations between Paris and the African capitals.

One original component of the French aid system is the decentralised cooperation defined in a bill written on 6 February 1992,¹⁹ which allows French councils, departments, and regions to organise their own aid projects. Every year, even if the allocated budget is modest, French decentralised administrations lead between 5,000 and 6,000 operations worldwide.²⁰

In 2005, official development assistance was equal to 0.44% of France's Gross National Income (€7,400 million). This puts France at the top of the G8 countries in terms of the percentage of GNI,²¹ and overall, France is in third place after the United States and Japan. The French government wants to increase its public aid from 0.5% in 2007 to 0.7% in 2012 in order to respect the millennium development engagements. These amounts include debt suppression or reduction. France is involved in the Debt Initiative for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) and has created a framework for all creditors to provide debt relief to the world's poorest and most heavily indebted nations. France has agreed to cancel \$7.6 billion of debt (\$54 billion has been cancelled by G7 countries after agreements during the summits in Lyon (1996) and Cologne (1999)).

France wishes to prioritise sub-Saharan Africa because this is the region where many of the UN's Millennium Development Goals will not be reached. Within the

¹⁸ Gabas, J-J., Op. cit. p.55.

¹⁹ Gabas, J-J, Op. cit. p. 31: "The territorial districts could sign conventions with foreign territorial districts in the limits of their competency and the respect of the France's international engagements."

²⁰ Gabas, J-J., Op. cit. p. 31-33.

²¹ http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/france-priorities_1/development_2108/french-policy_2589/governmental-strategies_2670/index.html

Priority Solidarity Zone,²² the emphasis will be on francophone Africa and the least developed countries. Seven priority sectors have been earmarked: education, water and sanitation, health and the fight against AIDS, infrastructure development, agriculture and food security, environment protection, and the productive sector.

France also maintains an instrument for implementing bilateral development aid. This is organised by the French Development Agency (AFD), a specialist financial institution and development bank. The AFD is involved in some of France's overseas territories and in countries in the Priority Solidarity Zone, and it is also an essential operator in the development cooperation mechanism. It contributes by providing financial assistance for public or private projects. The AFD provides a range of assistance for funding projects, from project donation to market condition loans.

Increasingly, France uses international financial institutions (the World Bank, IMF, African Bank) for development. It gives its support to the Sachs report,²³ but also wants to push forward some of its own initiatives.²⁴ It has called for an internationalisation of aid funding through innovative sources of financing; during the G8 summit in Gleneagles, for example, Jacques Chirac proposed an international air ticket solidarity contribution, the goal being to provide more funds for development. The French contribution alone could generate €200 million in additional resources for developing countries.²⁵ On 23 November 2005, the French government gave its approval for the project to commence in 2006. The United Kingdom, Chile and Brazil have joined the initiative and French diplomats want to increase the number of countries involved. Officially, nearly 60 states are interested, but George Bush's administration is opposed to this international tax and numerous countries are waiting for practical achievements before becoming involved. France also backs the

²² The Priority Solidarity Zone (ZSP) was set by the French government in February 1998 as the area in which development assistance, employed in a selective and concentrated way, could produce a significant effect and contribute to the harmonious development of institutions, society and the economy. The ZSP, the boundaries of which may change in line with Inter-ministerial Committee for International Co-operation and Development's (CICID) decisions, was set during the last meeting on 14 February 2002. On the 54 worldwide countries included in the list, 40 are located in sub-Saharan Africa.

²³ Sachs, J. 'Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals'. Downloadable from www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports. This report is included in the UN Millennium Project, commissioned by the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan. The American economist Jeffrey Sachs, from Columbia University, delivered the report, a plan to realise the 8 Millennium Development Goals, in January 2005.

²⁴ *Le rapport Sachs. Analyse et position française*, www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/IMG. This file defines French policy on aid and development.

²⁵ See <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/IMG/pdf/argumentaires-eng.pdf>

International Financing Facility proposed by United Kingdom. These new funds would be added to the national development assistance.

4 POLITICAL TRENDS (1990-2000)

As previously mentioned, the end of the Cold War changed the international context and, consequently, France's involvement with ex-colonies. Its *pré carré* in Africa is now under threat from other powers, most notably the United States and China. Interest from these nations means that France has to rethink its policies in the region, although its attitude is ambivalent and developing a new strategy has been difficult.

4.1 Democratic Conditionality

Although French diplomats and politicians have tried to moderate François Mitterrand's declaration at La Baule,²⁶ African commentators and political adversaries welcomed the shift in French foreign policy. It is difficult to estimate France's real involvement in democratic transition²⁷ because Paris has continued to back some dictators without sanctions, and has also not 'rewarded' some countries already involved in democratic transition.²⁸ Under the pretext of respecting nations' sovereignties, French policy does not lay out democratic standards for the whole continent. There is no defined democratic agenda for the different African states; instead the responsibility lies within each individual nation. However, French intervention or non-intervention in Africa during the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s cannot be summarised in arguments about democratic conditionality.

4.2 Stability: Military Presence on the Continent

France was the African *gendarme* during the Cold War – at which time the United States agreed to let France dominate French-speaking countries, but it now prefers

²⁶ François Mitterrand's La Baule speech, 20 June 1990: "France does not have to dictate a constitutional law model which will be imposed de facto to all peoples. By themselves, African people have to know how to lead themselves towards the universal principle which is democracy." Since 19 November 1991, when Mitterrand delivered a speech during the opening of the fourth Francophonie Summit, France has continued to delegate the democratic process to African states (Cf. *Politique étrangère de la France*, Nov-Dec 1991, p.48: African states can "define in all independency the modalities and rhythms of change as soon as the decision has been taken.") and the 18 July 1996 Chirac speech in front of the Congo's Congress in Brazzaville (*Politique étrangère de la France*, May-August 1996, p.89: "France has to rethink, with a tolerant and humble spirit, its role in helping Africa towards the difficult way of democracy...We do not have any lesson to give...Democracy is a state of mind...It is the fruit of a long apprenticeship").

²⁷ Bolle, S. 'La conditionnalité démocratique dans la politique africaine de la France', *Afrilex*, n°2, September 2001 (CERDRADI-CEAN, Bordeaux).

²⁸ In Mali, for example, the democratic transition started in 1991. The 2002 presidential and general elections and 2004 local elections were described as model, the constitution was respected with the withdrawal of the former president Alpha Oumar Konaré, but France's economic support did not increase.

to be likened to a 'fire-fighter'. Recent events in Chad and the Central African Republic can be seen to illustrate this position.²⁹ However, French leaders have had huge difficulties in adapting to the post-Cold War context and this deficiency in leadership is underlined by the lack of an overall plan. To maintain its status as a world power, France cannot accept volatility in its area of influence, therefore the need to retain stability in some regions has led to a tolerance, and even support, of dictatorships and their leaders. Paris knows its bilateral military interventions in Africa have proved controversial³⁰, and examples such as the CFA currency devaluation, Rwanda crisis, and support of old dictators can all be cited as evidence of this controversy. As French public opinion now refuses to tolerate such actions in the post-Cold war context, the army has had to face up to the challenge of modernisation.

Around 7,000 troops are present in Africa on a permanent basis; in Djibouti (2,800 troops), Dakar (1,100), Abidjan (1,000), Libreville (800) and N'djamena (1,000).³¹ This military presence has always been evidence of Paris's engagement in Africa. As previously mentioned, France is implicated by bilateral military relations and Paris also has defence treaties with seven states and military cooperation agreements with twenty-five.³² These include secret clauses.

The Rwandan conflict significantly affected France's credibility in Africa.³³ In 1995, on the orders of Jacques Chirac, the French army developed a new strategic approach. To prevent the army from being implicated in intricate civil and ethnic wars, it

²⁹ France is using defence treaties as an alibi to prevent military destabilisation of the regimes.

³⁰ For details on French interventions in Africa from independence to 1996, see Mc Kinnon, R. Charlton, R. May, R. 'What a difference a year makes : France and Sub-Saharan Africa under Chirac', *Bulletin of Francophone Africa*, Vol. 5, n°10, winter 1996-97, p.107-109. Since 1996, has France intervened in Côte d'Ivoire and Comoros.

³¹ The temporary 'Opération Epervier'.

³² Defence treaties assure French direct support in case of inter-state war. In military cooperation agreements France furnishes technical, logistic and training supports.

³³ Habyarimana's regime was supported by Paris for years. Paris did not try to stop the genocide and continued to deliver weapons to the Rwandese government after the beginning of the genocide. During three months of genocide, France refused to intervene. It only organised the controversial 'Operation Turquoise' which, under the cover of humanitarian intervention, allowed Hutu leaders to escape from the FPR offensive. Cf. De Saint-Exupéry, P. *L'inavouable. La France au Rwanda*, Les Arènes, Paris, 2004, p.289 And J-P Gouteux, 'Rwanda, la diplomatie française au service d'un génocide', in *Des crimes contre l'humanité en République française (1990-2002)*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2006. And J-F Dupaquier, 'L'intervention française au Rwanda: information et décision politique. Conclusions provisoires de la Commission d'Enquête Citoyenne sur le rôle de la France durant le génocide des Tutsi au Rwanda en 1994' in *Des crimes contre l'humanité en république française (1990-2002)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006). Péan, P. *Noires fureurs, blancs menteurs: Rwanda 1990-1994* (Paris: Mille et une nuits, 2005).

accepted the delegation of peacekeeping operations to African organisations such as the African Union. With the joint exercise 'RECAMP',³⁴ the French army helped to train potential African troops to be incorporated in UN peacekeeping's operations.³⁵ Recent French interventions seem to corroborate this multilateral policy. For example, UN mandates have been allowed in Côte d'Ivoire, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Plans for a general redeployment of troops are being drawn up. To assure a more efficient multilateral approach, France will keep only one military base for each strategic region in Africa, corresponding to the four African regional organisations: Dakar for ECOWAS, Libreville for ECCAS, Djibouti for EAC and Reunion Island for SADC.³⁶ Nonetheless, France's military and political activity still does not have a set standard.

France no longer wants to dominate in countries such as Chad or the Central African Republic, and is looking for burden-sharing when it comes to peacekeeping and peace support operations. The paradox is that although France wishes to encourage others to engage with it in French-speaking Africa, there remains little international appetite to assist.

4.3 The survival of the 'Françafrique'

With colonisation and 50 years of influence in Africa, a network has been created between French and African elites: '*la Françafrique*'. French policy-making is developed within this special network consisting of politicians, state officials, military officers, heads of oil and weapons firms and members of the African elite. It is a grey zone of diplomacy (such as Foccart period,³⁷ African Elysée's cell)³⁸ and the interests

³⁴ 'Renforcement des Capacités Africaines de Maintien de la Paix'. It is organised in cycles. In 2006, the sixth cycle starts. For more information: <http://www.recamp.fr>

³⁵ France assured the training of African peacekeeping officers in a school founded in Abidjan. The school's objective is to train qualified and competent officers for African peacekeeping forces. The events in Côte d'Ivoire forced the centre to move to Bamako.

³⁶ ECOWAS: Economic Community Of West African States; ECCAS: Economic Community of Central African States; EAC: East African Community; SADC: Southern Africa Development Community.

³⁷ Foccart was the 'Mr Africa' during De Gaulle presidency. He established the 'Françafrique' network. Put apart from 1974 to 2000, he was back at the beginning of 1995 Jacques Chirac's presidency. To obtain more detailed information about this period see: *Foccart parle: entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard*, t.1 & 2 (Paris: Fayard, 1995 & 1997) p.500 & p.525.

of populations are rarely included in the decisions. Riddled with corruption, the groups have now become infamous, most notably for sealing deals to enable the cheap trade of raw materials. Furthermore, France's support for numerous dictators, coups and rebellions during the Cold War years can be attributed to its involvement in the *Françafrique*.

In 1964, the re-establishment of Leon M'Ba as the President of Gabon after a transitory coup d'état was the first manifest interference of the '*Françafrique*'³⁹. Many others followed: in Congo-Brazzaville, Togo, Gabon, and Central African Republic. Since the 1990s, many other scandals have been brought to light in the courts.⁴⁰ Moreover, European partners will not approve all French policies towards Africa as they have to respect a minimum of deontology principles. But recent events in Chad, the Central African Republic, Benin and Togo have exposed evidence that confirms the influence of the network. Many African dictators have direct contact with Jacques Chirac's circle and French services maintain contact with all the main African political leaders by using them to impose France's point of view. The reality is that the logic of neo-colonial *Françafrique* continues to function even when officials claim it has been abandoned.

One of the difficulties of this network is the lack of representation for the continent's youths. Africa's population has increased dramatically without sufficient development to integrate the new generations into society. Young adults represent two-thirds of the population, leading to a marginalisation of African elites and a swell of young people wanting to change the system. The Algerian civil war (1992-9) provides the international community with an example of what can happen when a young, excluded population takes refuge in extremism. Hatred of corrupt regimes, unemployment, and crisis of values are generally used as an explanation. Similar social and political factors are currently present in sub-Saharan Africa.

³⁸ This was the name of the circle around President François Mitterrand which was in charge of the French foreign policy in Africa. It was directed by Mitterrand's son.

³⁹ Previous interventions in Cameroon (1959-1964: Counter-Revolutionary War against UPC) and Senegal (1962: French troops help keep the peace following a coup attempt against President Senghor).

⁴⁰ For example, Elf's scandal is well-known. Eight years of investigations from 1994 to 2001 revealed €183 million of embezzlements and vast sums of money being paid to French political parties to buy their support.

Another challenge to the Françafrique is the booming international commodity and investment market. To obtain international funds, African states have to respect the IMF criteria of free competition. Consequently, Anglo-Saxon, Chinese and European companies have developed their own direct contacts with African states. And the competition is now fierce.

5 INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION

France has to face up to its new competitors. Increases in global growth, political instability among oil producers and the rise of prices on the oil market have enhanced interest in African potential. Key economic rivals include the Chinese and Anglo-Saxon firms based in francophone Africa, at one time France's key area of influence. Exacerbating the situation is the current turbulent climate in the Middle East, as major oil importers are looking to Africa to diversify their sources.

However, French private companies do not seem interested by potential African markets. In the last 15 years, French business investment has declined and even in countries as strategic as Nigeria, French political, intellectual and business interest is surprisingly thin. With the structural adjustment plans from the IMF and the fall of raw material markets during the 1980s and '90s, the formerly ubiquitous, traditional French neo-colonial business systems have been displaced.⁴¹ The French also took little part in the recent 'jump' in foreign direct investment ('FDI') in sub-Saharan Africa: France is classified in fourth position with 4% of the stock of 'FDI', as compared with 13% for the United Kingdom, 8% for the United States, and 5% for the Netherlands.⁴² Leading French companies have adapted their strategies and focused their interests mostly on two economic sectors: oil and telecommunications. These developments are a threat to France's position in Africa.

Three reasons explain this lack of interest. First of all, very few French groups still have an African strategy. In world competition, sub-Saharan Africa is characterised by its limited markets, with a gross domestic product of some €248 billion. Secondly, the opening of the continent to an economic liberal system under the influence of the World Trade Organization (WTO) has encouraged a 'standardisation' of French dealings. Previously, French capitalism could thrive quietly because it had been protected from external competition by its monopolistic positions and its close links with the political world. Nowadays the French must face competition, in particular from Chinese groups.⁴³ The French economic redeployment can also be explained

⁴¹ McKinnon, R. Charlton, R. May R. 'What a Difference a Year Makes? France and Sub-Saharan Africa under Chirac', *Bulletin of Francophone Africa*, Vol.5, N°10, winter 1996-97, p.95.

⁴² Vignaux B. Hoh A-V. 'L'Afrique n'est plus l'eldorado des entreprises françaises', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, February 2006.

⁴³ Servant, J-C. 'La Chine à l'assaut du marché africain', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, May 2005.

by the chronic instability and political hostility France finds in former strategic partners such as Côte d'Ivoire and Rwanda.

6 FRANCE IN EUROPE

The impact of EU integration on French foreign policy is immense, and French leaders have definitely incorporated their policies with the European dream. The last referendum shows that the debate is now centred around which Europe French people want; in 1992, during the Maastricht referendum, the debate had centred around the existence of the European Union at all.

The integration process has changed France's method of diplomacy. Paris is keener to develop a multilateral strategy, although sharing information and involving European partners will not come easily. It has always been difficult for EU member states to develop a common political vision on foreign politics. France has lobbied in favour of strengthening the international position of the European community via the development of common policies.⁴⁴ It has also continued to try to develop a common policy towards Africa. In speeches by French leaders the point is repeatedly made that all actions have to be talked through with European partners.⁴⁵

The European Development Fund is one example where the outcome is a common economic policy towards ex-European colonies. One of the first characteristics of the European aid is democratic conditionality. This concept has been gradually registered and developed in the conventions of Lomé III (1985), Lomé IV (1990), Lomé V (1995) and Cotonou (2000).⁴⁶ Economic sanctions can be imposed on non-democratic states, and aid could be suppressed if governments don't respect democratic principles and the rule of law.⁴⁷

This has been expanded by a political line with the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). In the Maastricht Treaty, the concept of 'joint actions' outlined the EU Community as an international actor with Africa, as it is the only area outside Europe where European states agreed to develop a common policy. Although the objectives of this policy are still not completely defined, conflict prevention was

⁴⁴ Olsen, G. R. 'Challenges to the Traditional Policy Options, Opportunities for New Choices: The African Policy of the EU', *The Round Table*, 375, July 2004, p.425-436.

⁴⁵ Douste-Blazy, P. 'Quelle diplomatie pour la France?', *Politique Internationale*, n°110, hiver 2005-2006, p.13-32; De Villepin, D. 'Diplomatie et action', *Politique Internationale*, tiré à part, n°102, hiver 2003-2004, p.5-62; Balladur, E. 'Diplomatie française', *Politique Internationale*, n°106, hiver 2004-2005, p.161-174.

⁴⁶ Articles 1, 8, and 9.2 of the Cotonou Convention.

⁴⁷ Article 98 of the Cotonou Convention.

the first strategy to be agreed upon.⁴⁸ in June 2003, the EU deployed 1,800 troops in the Ituri province in the DRC for the first operation outside of Europe. France was the 'framework nation' in that it deployed most of the troops and commanded logistics.

The first lesson of this intervention was that France's involvement in the EU has affected the definition of foreign relations in both directions: European partners influence French policy-making, and vice-versa. The EU advocates a multilateral approach. In Operation Artemis, European troops handed over control to UN troops in accordance with May 2003's UN Security Council Resolution. After this success, the United Kingdom, Germany and France pushed a joint proposal for an EU Rapid Reaction Force composed of nine groups of about 1,500, ready for action in 15 days and capable of staying in the field for up four months.

However, it is clear that France wants to retain the leadership of EU-led operations in Francophone Africa. Some European armies are involved in the RECAMP exercises.

⁴⁸ Olsen, G. R. Op. Cit, p.431.

The France-Africa Summit

The France-Africa summit in Cannes on 15 and 16 February 2007 will be the 24th such summit since 1973. Although these summits are driven by France, the original idea came from the presidents of Niger and Senegal who wanted a structure similar to the Commonwealth. From 1977 the summit was annual and from 1989 it became biannual, with a rotation between France and an African location.

The 1973 and 1975 summits only accepted French-speaking countries but subsequently all African countries could attend as observers. Since the Ouagadougou summit in 1996 all African countries (except states under UN sanctions or who do not have an internationally recognized government) have been invited to fully participate. At the Yaoundé summit in 2001, 52 states were invited (only the Comoros did not receive an invitation because of AU sanctions) and during the Paris summit of 2003, 52 countries sent delegations and 45 heads of state attended.

Summit business

The summits are structured around a main issue, with informal side sessions. The 2007 Cannes summit's theme is "Africa and the world equilibrium." Due to increasing participation, the 2007 Cannes summit is structured slightly differently. Although its main theme is "Africa and the world equilibrium" there are sub-theme groups on "Raw materials in Africa", "Africa's importance in the world" and "Africa and the Media". Each state, will choose which sub-theme it wishes to engage on.

As many African heads of state are present such summits provide an opportunity for informal networking and bilateral consultation. Since 1988, a meeting of the foreign minister has been organized between summits to evaluate the results of the previous summit and prepare the theme of the next which is usually held in the city of the previous summit. These summits are aimed at promoting French influence in Africa and are likely to continue to be an important diplomatic tool to assist French diplomacy.

Zimbabwe controversy and the EU-Africa Summit

President Mugabe of Zimbabwe has attended many of these summits. The February 2002 EU Common Position on Zimbabwe which included targeted sanctions such as visa bans for senior Zimbabwean officials has become a source of tension. The Common Position does provide for exemptions for travel by Zimbabwean officials to meetings 'where political dialogue is conducted that directly promotes democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Zimbabwe.' President Mugabe attended the Paris summit in February 2003, which drew protests and demonstrations in Paris over his human rights record.

Zimbabwean participation at the Cannes Summit continues to be controversial. NGOs and unions demonstrated on 2 February 2007 outside the French Embassy in London against this and conducted a letter writing and advocacy campaign. Unusually three French unions, CGT, CFDT and FO wrote a letter on 30 January 2007 to the French Foreign Minister Douste Blazy, warning of serious demonstrations in Cannes during the summit if Zimbabwean officials participate.

These groups have an eye also on a planned EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon in autumn 2007 during the Portuguese presidency of the EU. During the last Portuguese Presidency of the EU (January-June 2000), the EU-Africa Summit had to be cancelled because of the visa ban on Zimbabweans and the reluctance of Africans to attend if President Mugabe was excluded. A number of EU states want to ensure a successful EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon to counter last year's China summit in Beijing as they are fearful of China's growing impact in Africa. A coalition of civil society groups opposes Zimbabwean government participation on human rights and governance grounds.

France would prefer to invite President Mugabe to its France-Africa Summit in Cannes but has been lobbied against this by the United Kingdom government. A number of African States, in particular South Africa, have lobbied for Mugabe's participation and President Mbeki has threatened not to participate unless Mugabe is invited. France finds itself needing United Kingdom support on issues such as Côte d'Ivoire in the Security Council but also wishing to improve its bilateral relationship with South Africa for political and economic reasons. What happens on Zimbabwe in Cannes will directly influence the positioning of other EU and African states over an EU-Africa summit later in the year.

7 2007 ELECTIONS

As mentioned in Sections 1 and 2, Franco-African relationships are in part driven by personal connections between the executive heads. This interdependence has until now been inherited from the colonial past. But the arrival of a new political class could end this. In theory, the 2007 French presidential elections signal the potential for change because they bring to an end a generation of politicians born during colonization; in practice, the interest of the new leadership contenders is highly debatable.

Even if there is a repeat of Jean-Marie Le Pen's surprise entry into the second round in 2002, the two main parties in France will still be the 'UMP' (*Union pour un Mouvement Populaire*) and the *Parti Socialiste*. As the presidential battle begins in Paris, Ségolène Royal has been chosen to represent the *Parti Socialiste* and Sarkozy was nominated for the 'UMP' in January 2007. Sarkozy is the current home minister and the UMP's first secretary. Royal, on the other hand, seems to have gained favour thanks to a powerful media campaign.

Neither of the would-be presidents have wasted any time in presenting the media with photo opportunities meant to herald a fresh approach. When tough-talking Sarkozy visited Mali and Benin in 2006, he attacked Jacques Chirac's *Françafrique* policy and called for 'new relations' between France and Africa; in Mali he stated that "economically, France no longer needs Africa."⁴⁹ Meanwhile, Royal, eager to play up her African roots, chose to visit Senegal, the country of her birth. These two adversaries are keen to depict themselves as 'whiter than white' politicians who would like to change the French system in the continent; it is interesting to note, however, that both their political circles have been implicated in *Françafrique* networks.

7.1 Nicolas Sarkozy

At the beginning of his career, Nicolas Sarkozy was mentored by Charles Pasqua.⁵⁰ Following in Pasqua's footsteps, Sarkozy was the head of the Hauts de Seine department and now leads the Home Office.

⁴⁹ The Africa Report, *Jeune Afrique*, no.5, January 2007, p.67.

Pasqua had a major part in defining the policy towards Africa from the 1970s to the 1990s when he led one of the most important Françafrique networks.⁵¹ However, when Sarkozy visited Mali and Benin in May, then Senegal in September, he attempted to create some distance by attacking Chirac's Françafrique policy and denouncing the networks.⁵² It is interesting to note Sarkozy's decision to visit Mali and Benin, two of the most democratic Francophone states, a move which sends a clear message to African dictators.⁵³

Additionally, Sarkozy's speeches can be taken as an indication but not 'proof' of his new approach. However they must be read carefully, and in context. The current interior minister is determined to distance himself from Jacques Chirac. The rivalry between the two is well documented.⁵⁴ Sarkozy wants to build the image of himself as a new type of French politician, even though he has been politically active for almost 30 years. In Benin and Senegal he outlined a new immigration policy, calling for a selection process based on the need of the French employment market. This policy received widespread opposition from local MPs; therefore, in order to silence critics, he has reinforced an already existing co-development initiative.

⁵⁰ In 1983, Nicolas Sarkozy declared: "Everyone knows that I'm its copy". Charles Pasqua was best man at Sarkozy's first wedding. From the 1970s to the early 1990s Charles Pasqua was one of Jacques Chirac's closest allies who picked him as Home Office minister between 1986 and 1988. He created the Jacques Chirac and former RPR's networks in Africa. They disagreed on the Maastricht Treaty and the Pasqua's support, as well as Sarkozy, to Edouard Balladur during the presidential elections of 1995.

⁵¹ Charles Pasqua had been implicated in Elf, Angolagate and many others corruption scandals. Charles Pasqua used the Hauts de Seine institutional framework to sustain his African network. In spite of these judicial procedures he is still very influential in French political life and in the Sarkozy circles. In 2004 he was re-elected as senator in the Hauts de Seine department with the Sarkozy goodwill. This election has permitted him to avoid judicial penalties.

⁵² The 18 May 2006 Mali speech is real program for French foreign policy: "What I'm sure is that African happiness does not pass by tyrannical government, arbitral policies or neglected institutions. We do not have to accept anymore that Aid could become a prime to bad governance and predators regimes." (http://www.interieur.gouv.fr/misill/sections/a_l_interieur/le_ministre/interventions/18-05-2006-deplacement-mali/view). In his 19 May 2006 speech in Benin, Sarkozy stated that, "...there is no African exception, no cultural specificity which could justify I do not know what incompatibility between Africa and democracy. We have to build a new relationship; cleaner, uncomplicated, balanced, and cleaned of the errors from the past...turn the page of complaisance, secrets and ambiguity... We have to clean our relationship from networks from another time, from officious emissary who only have the mandate that they invent. Relationships between modern states should not only depend on the personal links between heads of state." (http://www.interieur.gouv.fr/misill/sections/a_l_interieur/le_ministre/interventions/19-05-2006-deplacement-benin/view)

⁵³ Information attained from phone interview with UMP representative, July 2006.

⁵⁴ Béatrice Gurrey, *Le rebelle et le roi* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2004) p.240.

7.2 Ségolène Royal

The African aspirations of Ségolène Royal are more difficult to establish. Only recently under the spotlight, she is known for her views on family and environment, but little else. Critics point to her inexperience as a grave weakness, and there is no information regarding her economic and foreign aspirations; indeed, with the exception of her birth in Dakar in 1953, she seems largely to have avoided involvement with the African continent. Her only notable contributions to the African debate are a solar energy pledge⁵⁵ and a speech about co-development in Dakar; this speech centred on France's regional aid-giving system, and featured Royal calling for more fundraising to increase the amount sent to places like Dakar.

Royal's political background betrays very little. Her mentor was Jacques Attali who included her in the François Mitterrand circle during the 1980s. Royal, however, was not in charge of foreign affairs and did not seem to mingle with the socialist *Françafrique*. As a result, she could well find herself in the same situation as Lionel Jospin; in 1997, Jospin wanted to shift French foreign policy toward Africa but he faced opposition from Jacques Chirac's circles as well as the socialist networks founded during the presidencies of François Mitterrand.⁵⁶

7.3 Conclusion

Both candidates claim to have a fresh approach in relation to African issues, but the experiences of Edouard Balladur, Alain Juppé, Lionel Jospin and Dominique de Villepin have proved that such claims are not enough to change neo-colonial links. The reality is that neither Sarkozy nor Royal have drawn up any concrete proposals likely to change current policies. Public relations exercises in West Africa are one thing, but well-defined, workable policies are quite another.

⁵⁵ 'Elle veut mettre le soleil au service de l'Afrique', *Le Figaro*, 22 Juillet 2006 : http://www.lefigaro.fr/france/20060722.FIG000000502_elle_veut_mettre_le_soleil_au_service_de_l_afrique.html

⁵⁶ Michel Rocard, Roland Dumas and Laurent Fabius have kept personal 'friendships' in some African capitals.

8 CONCLUSIONS

Mistakes in Africa during the 1990s, particularly in Rwanda and the corruption scandals of the *Françafrique*, have put pressure on French leaders to bring dramatic changes in foreign policy, as have modern economic reforms and the adoption of the 'multilateral' strategies.

There is no doubt that French relations with Africa are in a transitional period,⁵⁷ especially signified by Jacques Chirac, who started important reforms such as military redeployment and aid reforms. However he has been unable to integrate them into a more concrete vision which could have thwarted prohibitive neo-colonial links. Moreover, African, or, more generally, international politics do not seem to be a priority for the 2007 presidential candidates. Royal generally appears disinterested in African policies and Sarkozy's interest is in the context of illegal immigration. They are focusing on domestic issues. The stark truth is that without strong political will or defined argument, any future president is unlikely to curb the strength of lobby groups and old networks.

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⁵⁷ P. Douste-Blazy, 'Quelle diplomatie pour la France?', *Politique Internationale*, n°110, hiver 2005-2006, p.13-32; De Villepin, D. 'Diplomatie et action', *Politique Internationale*, tiré à part, n°102, hiver 2003-2004, p.5-62; Balladur, E. 'Diplomatie française', *Politique Internationale*, n°106, hiver 2004-2005, p.161-174; Barnier, M. 'Diplomatie française: le réflexe européen', *Politique Internationale*, n°107, printemps 2005, p.129-146; Moscovici, P. 'Pour une autre politique étrangère', *Politique Internationale*, n°106, hiver 2004-2005, p.177-197.