French Policy in Africa:
The Presence of France in its Former African Colonies

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1. Introduction

In the second part of the 20th Century, the colonial French Empire started a huge process of decolonization of its African colonies, which led to the independence of these states. The end of a “common” history which lasted a century and was the real end of the empire. Since then, Africa has always been an important and controversial part of the policy of the French government. Charles De Gaulle, François Mitterrand, Nicolas Sarkozy or even today’s president Emmanuel Macron, all of them had different political approaches towards Africa.

There are several reasons why I chose to write my thesis about this particular subject. Besides my high interest in African studies, I am aiming at teaching something to the reader, and perhaps, changing his/her opinion about the French influence in Africa. Further to this, I wish to enlarge my knowledge about French foreign affairs policies. Indeed, I wish to work for the French ministry of foreign affairs. I have also noticed that during the last decade, Africa is being less and less covered by the media, as Syria and Terrorism are being covered on a daily basis. I strongly believe that France still has a role in Africa in order to repair its past mistakes done during the colonial era. Africa is a strong asset for the French culture and language, as long as we keep fair relations between each other.

Here is a short review of the relevant literature I have been using through my analysis.


The book has a really honest and recent overview of the subject. It provided me the crucial information about the Zone Franc complicated system without focusing too much on criticism over the system. The book started with an introductory part about the Franco-African relations and how did France succeed to impose this currency to the member states of the Franc zone. It then continued by explaining the technicity of the Franc CFA. It was followed by details such as how France denied the African claims for a change
over the system as well as how did France manage to keep it advantageous. Further to
this, one of the main advantages of this book is the way things are being objectively
explained. Thanks to this aspect, I could use this system as the major argument of my
economic part while adding my personal thinking.


The book from Yves Gounin, a former advisor for the French ambassador in Kenya has
written this book by detailing his vision of the controversial Franco-African relations
from inside, as he has been an actor of these relations. The text is written with one main
aim which is to provide information without criticizing it, which is perfect for a student
writing his thesis. Gounin explained these relations from both sides. On the one hand, the
people saying that France is putting enough efforts in Africa, with for example the
involvement in the Rwandan genocide or the Darfur. On the other hand, the people saying
that France is doing too much in Africa, by supporting undemocratic authoritarian
regimes for example. The most valuable aspect of this book for a student writing his thesis
like me is the way these relations are being explained in its entirety: the economic,
political and cultural details of the Françafrique are all being explained throughout the
chapters. Most of all, the main argument which emerged from this book of which I have
never heard about, it is the distinction between the ancient and the modern actors of the
Françafrique that the writer is making. Before understanding this, I was analyzing the
type of African policy of a French president depending on their political beliefs, which
was a mistake when analyzing these particular relations.

Catherine Gegout (2018). Why Europe intervenes in Africa, security, prestige and the
legacy of colonialism.

In order to write the introduction of my military policy part, I needed first to understand
why European powers are intervening in Africa. Catherine Gegout’s book was the perfect
answer to my question. In addition to this, the focus is clearly on the French case, as
France is the country which intervened the most in Africa. Once again, the arguments
were objective and realist enough. Moreover, it was interesting to have the opinion of a
scholar who is neither French nor African. The structure of the book was essential to my
analysis; the first chapters were introducing the European intervention in a theoretical
framework, and then the book was focusing on case studies, such as one particular French intervention in an African country for instance.

Fabrice Tarrit & Thomas Noirot (2014). Françafrique : La famille recomposée.

I chose to use this book in my thesis because of the strong convictions of the authors. Indeed, compared to the previous books I’ve just mentioned, the authors are strongly criticizing France for its actions in Africa. It was relevant to use it in my thesis because their thinking fits with the theory I am using, namely postcolonialism.

In my opinion, and according to the literature I have read while writing my thesis, I believe there is a lack of articles and books which are questioning the moral aspect and the legitimacy of the French presence from a perspective which is neither the French one nor the scholars one. Many articles provide relevant details and explanations without digging any deeper. This is why I want my thesis to be able to present the French presence in Africa as a whole but also to show how it is perceived by the African citizens.

My thesis statement is the following:

**The French presence in Africa is no longer legitimate, but rather neocolonial. The reason is that it relies on an old unofficial system from the past century which was created in the Charles De Gaulle era. The French state should be creating true respectful relations on the economic, military, diplomatic and cultural level by renewing these old-fashioned policies and focusing on what matters today in the 21st century as well as fulfilling its promise of ending Françafrique.**

I truly believe that my thesis is not only relevant to me. It concerns France but can be interpreted into different colonial cases throughout history. If the reader of this thesis can understand how controversial and complicated it is for a colonizer state to withdraw itself completely from a colonized state, and by completely I also mean in a cultural way as well as in the minds of the citizens, then one of my goals would be fulfilled. On a more

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1 French popular expression used to qualify the relations between France and its former colonies. It will be explained in more details in the first part.
personal point of view, I need this thesis to understand the motivations of our political leaders to act how they do in Africa. From what I saw and what I know, the reason why Africa is such a sensible and important topic had not been clear for me.

As I will be detailing later in the analysis, all previous French presidents since Charles De Gaulle promised to put an end to Françafrique. But none of them did. It has been like an unanswered question to me since these kinds of promises have been like a must for a French presidential elections campaign. In this thesis, I aim to answer this question and explain why no president could fulfill this promise. My analysis of Macron’s African policy will be more detailed than the previous ones (Nicolas Sarkozy and François Hollande) because Macron is in office and has better opportunities to stop Françafrique than his predecessors had. Macron is a really interesting case to analyze because he has really good communication skills, and one of the first things he did after his investiture was to go to Burkina Faso where he promised to put an end to these controversial Franco-African relations, an intervention which I will analyze in the first part.

Besides getting this information, my thesis is relevant to anyone who wants to learn more about politics and economy in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as those who wonder why the military of Western countries are significantly active in the region. The thesis is also really actual because it deals with the French presence as it is today.

My whole thesis will be written according to the postcolonial theory, which will be explained in the first part. I chose this theory because it confirms my personal thoughts about the subject and is being used by most of the scholars who write about the Franco-African relations.

The methodological approach I will be using through the analysis in order to prove my statement that France’s presence is no longer legitimate will be divided into different parts:

Firstly, a comparison between the different African policies of the three past presidents will be done, using mostly articles from French and African newspapers. I made the choice to use mostly newspaper articles because it is (usually) just a report of facts which can give us the opportunity to draw our own opinion and interpretation about the behavior of a given president, even though many are politically oriented. Nevertheless, having a
great number of newspapers with different opinions can help us to have an objective opinion. Indeed, my goal in this first part is to read through the lines of these articles in order to find common behavior of the different presidents, and to interpret it as something that goes behind the political orientations of the presidents. As an introductory part, I will give information about the different decolonization processes of the French African colonies as they are relevant in order to understand the possible tensions or not in a specific region. I will summarize and group it into two “models”: the Algerian type and the Sub-Saharan type of decolonization. It is such a wide topic that a thesis could be written just about one decolonization process from one country, but in the case of my thesis, it will be a perfect introduction even without the deep analysis that can be done about it.

The next step of my work is the explanation of the overall French influence in the region. And by that, I mean many different types of influence. It will not only be about the physical presence of French nationals in Africa, of course. I will divide the French influence into different aspects: The economic, the military, and the diplomatic which will be explained through the other parts as well. In order to write this influence part, I will use mainly scholarly articles and books from both African and French writers as well as some written by “foreigners” which will add some objectivity to this part. I need these secondary sources in this part because of the complexity of some aspects of the influence.

My thesis statement will be partly proven after the analysis of the different policies of the French president towards Africa, which were more or less the same at some point in the way that no “recent” president did drastically change the way things worked. Moreover, by the clarification of the current objectives of Paris, it will be possible to understand how neocolonial the behavior of France is, even today. The final part of my thesis has a different objective which can be fulfilled only if the last parts were explicit enough. The role of the third part is whether to find or not legitimacy in the French presence, from both legal and moral points of view, as well as giving my opinion from the information I could find about the legitimacy of such a presence. The interview of some former inhabitants of French-speaking Africa will provide precious information about the moral aspect of such a presence.
2. Historical background

2.1. The decolonization process in Sub-Saharan Africa

The French colonization in Africa was quite short compared to that of other empires (one century in Senegal, 60 years in Chad…). Some historians, while evoking the African history on a large-scale, are even mentioning a “colonial parenthesis.” But it was enough to leave a lasting and traumatic mark there (Rufin, 2009).

The majority of the French colonies in Africa acceded to independence around 1960. In West Africa, it happened without violence, contrary to the long walk to the independence of the Maghreb countries. The reason might be that the French state wanted to “get rid of its Sub-Saharan burden”. What did it change, on a day-to-day basis for the people who yesterday were under French control, and are today independent? Not much. The locals found themselves with sovereignty they did not really ask for, and of which, according to the French settlers, they were not ready for. It is relevant to take into consideration the role of the former colonial administrators after the decolonization. Most of them remained in position in the countries they had been working before independence. Same offices, same duties, many found a good position in the new system of cooperation created by the French state. Ironically, the “brand new” French advisors were chosen from among the former colonial administrators and made available for the African presidents. Edgar Faure, a former French minister and important actor of the Franco-African relations, qualified this special relation as “independence in interdependence” (Gounin, 2009).

In political terms, the young independent states of Africa adopted something like the occidental state’s structures, with a strong power held between the presidential hands and a minimalization of the role of the intermediate bodies. Back then, the African administrations were like mirrors reflecting the French ones. The military equipment and instructors were supplied by France. Absurdly and contrasting with the recent
decolonization of the Hexagon\textsuperscript{2}, the number of expats in Africa was higher in 1963 than in 1956 (Gounin, 2009).

The African leaders were not ashamed at all of working with French collaborators. For instance, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, a former Ivorian president and one of the main actors of the Franco-African relations said to Jacques Foccart, the French “Mr. Africa”: “If I had Ivorians as cabinet director and secretary general, I would be colonized by Baoulés\textsuperscript{3} or others” (Glaser & Smith, 1994).

2.2. The decolonization process in Algeria

In North Africa, the French decolonization was a different story. Many violent events tainted the long and difficult road to the independence of these countries. The greatest example for explaining the complexity of the process is the Algerian case. In Algeria, the feeling of nationalism was born and divided into three different nationalist tendencies which gained importance during the interwar period.

– The “young Algerians” who were a small elite who acquired a French culture. They were protesting against the colonial system and claiming for wider rights for the Muslims and their participation in the political life in Algeria.
– The Ouléma association in 1931 created by Ben Badis. They aimed at reforming Islam, protecting the Arab language and guaranteeing the Algerian personality against francization.
– The Algerian People’s Party (APP) in 1937 under the leadership of Messali Hadj, claiming for Algerian independence. (Shepard, 2013)

At the end of the Second World War in February 1943, Ferhat Abbas wrote the \textit{Algerian People Manifesto} in which he claimed for the constitution of an autonomous and

\textsuperscript{2} \textit{Popular French expression used to qualify France because of its hexagonal shape.}

\textsuperscript{3} \textit{Akan people of one of the largest groups in Côte d’Ivoire who historically migrated from Ghana. The Baoulés are traditionally farmers and they live in the center of the country.}
democratic Algerian state federated to France. George Catroux, the French governor in Algeria back then directly rejected it. Charles De Gaulle was aware of the situation in Algeria and announced reforms about the status of the country. The Algerian people were not satisfied with it. They felt the denial of Paris concerning the strong will of the citizens to enjoy their national sovereignty, and the feeling of nationalism in Algeria kept growing bigger and bigger (Stora, 2010).

In 1945, the economic difficulties and the weakening of the colonial authority led to the spreading of the influence of the APP, leading to the arrest of their leader Messali Hadj in April 1945. It was the beginning of a series of violent events in Algeria, as violent riots broke out in Sétif and the surrounding areas. A hundred French people were massacred, followed by the response of the French authorities, where more than 50,000 Algerian people died. It was the awakening of the Algerian violent and radical masses. By the end of WWII, the Algerian nationalism was re-organized and led to the organization of terrorist attacks gathered around the insurrection of November 1st, 1954, leading to the creation of the National Liberation Front (NLF) (Rabah, A. 2012).

As it was planned, 30 terrorist attacks happened, and the response of Paris was to crush the Algerian insurrection. The Algerian masses participated more and more in the civil war and thanks to the support of the already independent states (Tunisia and Morocco), the NLF has spread its influence over the country. The level of violence in Algeria has risen up quickly and the French response to it was always more violent, and thanks to this violence France won the battle of Algiers but not the Algerian war. France even bombed the Tunisian border village of Sidi-Youssef to “punish” them for supporting the NLF, an act which has spread the hate of French colonialists in the Maghreb countries. The United Nations condemned the French behavior and De Gaulle decided to solve the Algerian conflict once for all, but his decisions went against the will of the French people in Algeria. In 1961, a coup d’état was organized by a group of French in Algeria called Organization of the Secret Army, but it failed. This event marked the real end of French Algeria. The Evian agreements were signed in March 1962 and constituted the real basis of Algerian independence (Stora, 2010).

The Algerian war was one of the longest conflicts of all the decolonization processes. Even though the country is now independent thanks to the high tenacity of the Algerian masses, these events represent a tragedy which left a lasting mark in the Algerian and
French spirits because of the human losses and political consequences\textsuperscript{4}. When we talk about the French decolonization of its former colonies, it is impossible to gather all of it in the same group. Each state knew a different process, but the main difference is geographical and can be divided between Sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb. As mentioned before, the decolonization in Sub-Saharan Africa was less violent and totally agreed by the French government and left in the region as a legacy a lasting cooperation which still remains today, in 2019. This cooperation was organized by the French and African authorities as it was seen as a benefit for both actors.

For North Africa, especially in the case of Algeria, it was almost the opposite as it was an armed conflict and led to the death of many people. The French State could not create a lasting cooperation as it can be with Sub-Saharan African countries because of the post-Algerian war trauma which lingers on in the spirits of the Algerians. However, we will see later in the analysis that there is still a strong French influence in the Maghreb, which goes beyond the cultural and linguistic aspects.

\textsuperscript{4} On Wednesday, February 14\textsuperscript{th}, 2017, during his presidential campaign, E. Macron stated that the French colonization in Algeria was a crime against humanity. Later in 2018, on September 13\textsuperscript{th}, he publicly recognized the French responsibility over the death of Maurice Audin, an Algerian independentist who mysteriously disappeared on June 11, 1957. The Algerian militant was 25, back then. E. Macron has met the widow of M. Audin on this day and apologized on behalf of the French state (Le Monde-A, 2017).
3. The contrasted African policies of the French presidents in the 21st century

3.1. Postcolonial studies

The postcolonial studies, widely known under the name of postcolonialism were born in the 80s, finding its roots in postmodernism. It refers to the cultural legacy left by a colonizer state to the colonized state. The meaning of these theories is going beyond the simple geographical analysis and has a strong critical approach towards the colonizer state. The colonies or former colonies concerned by the postcolonial studies are the countries which belonged to the French, British, Spanish, Portuguese empires, mainly in Africa (Boulbina, 2007). It is a recurrent theory when looking for sources about the Franco-African relations, especially when the author of the article is African. But when looking at the work of French authors, this is less common to find a deep postcolonial thought in the article. I rather think that this lack of popularity of postcolonialism in the Hexagon is directly linked with the shame that France can have when facing its colonial past and its neocolonial present, Another way to understand this unpopularity is that it can be scary for a French author to write with a huge level of criticism towards its own country, in a context when France is regularly being criticized for its paternalist behavior towards the former colonies (Bancel, 2017).

The French Republic is today “One and indivisible”⁵. According to Nicolas Bancel, if postcolonialism became really popular in France, it could represent a risk for the integration of the descendant of the former empire, maybe even aggravate the divide between those groups and the society as a whole (Bancel, 2017). However, overseas, I could find a vast number of postcolonial works, whether in Africa or in the United Kingdom, where it is really popular, even though the UK is concerned by the critics of

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⁵ Sentence from the first article of French fifth republic’s constitution (French constitution of October 4, 1958. Art. I).
postcolonial studies. The scholars from both regions agree on the fact that France still plays a major role in their respective areas.

3.2. Three different presidents, three different Françafriques

The independence of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa did not impact Franco-African relations as much as we may have thought it would. The sovereignty of the Sub-Saharan states is not total. If it were, we could expect from them to make their own currency and to ensure their defense by themselves. These political, economic and military relations between the former colonizer and the colonized states can be resumed by one word, invented by Félix Houphouët-Boigny, who was also one of its main actors: **Françafrique**. When this term was first pronounced, it did not have a pejorative connotation. But later, in the second half of the 90s, the term was reused by François-Xavier Verschave, a French scholar in order to qualify the neocolonialist behavior of the French State with a pun: “la France à fric”6 (Verschave, 1998). Before going deeper into the analysis of the French influence, it is important to start saying that the relations are not clearly unilateral. It has been proven by many and since a long time that it was the French influence that shaped the African states and not the other way around, but the existence of a very active “African Cell” led by Jacques Foccart in the Élysée palace under De Gaulle and Mitterrand governments proves that a branch of policies is oriented towards African policies, which behind closed doors, might have influenced more than one decision (Gounin, 2009). We can differentiate the Franco-African relations before and after 1994, when three major events happened, marking the end of the first type of French postcolonial influence in Africa.

- The death of Félix Houphouët-Boigny on February 7th, probably the most symbolic event. Almost all the actors of Françafrique attended the funeral of the former Ivorian president.

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6 Play on words which sounds similar to « Françafrique » but means “the France of money “.
On January 11th, the devaluation of the franc CFA, the currency of the French former colonies, which did not change since 1948, meant, for the African leaders almost an economic treason from France.

Three months later, the infamous Rwandan genocide which left around 800,000 people dead. France has been widely criticized for its involvement in the genocide, because of having armed and trained the Hutu military forces (who were the perpetrators of the genocide) and most of all for closing the eyes on the planning of this tragic event, as well as for its indifference (Wallis, 2013).

We can illustrate the period before 1994 as the golden age of the Franco-African relations. As a simple and critical summary of it, some scholars (including Verschave) are identifying it like an iceberg, with the visible part of it which is about helping Africa and promoting Human Rights, and the invisible one, darker, made of crimes, predation and political interferences (Tarrit, 2014).

3.2.1. The controversial African policy of Nicolas Sarkozy

In the 21st century, the French decision-makers have taken a different direction from their predecessors. The assumption of powers by Nicolas Sarkozy and François Hollande let the people think that the Franco-African relations would change drastically. They were both holding speeches of reconsideration of the relations. But the biggest impact of these statements was to accentuate the difference between what France says it does in Africa and what France is actually doing, as I mentioned before, the visible and the hidden part of the iceberg.

The African policy of Nicolas Sarkozy is nevertheless important considering his will of real “rupture” of the French influence in Africa. His mandate is characterized by the continuing policies and ideologies of his predecessors, contrasting with his discourse of rupture. As an illustrative example of his involvement in Africa, we can mention the 2011
Libya intervention\(^7\) and his relations with Muammar Gaddafi\(^8\). On the economic plan, Sarkozy’s mandate has been marked by the strong promotion of the French economic interests (Thiam, 2008). For instance, here is a statement of the French Secretary of State for International Cooperation Alain Joyandet summarizing the economic position of France towards Africa back then: “We want to help Africans, but it needs to bring us money” (Joyandet, 2008). Apparently, the shared opinion of getting money by helping Africa in Sarkozy’s government was not compatible with dealing with corrupted and authoritarian governments, but it happened anyway\(^9\). Sarkozy’s speech about the renewing of the Franco-African relations was strongly contrasted with the comeback of close relations with businessmen who are really active in Africa such as Vincent Bolloré, Patrick Balkany, or Martin Bouygues. The president’s relations with such actors reminded us of the different networks of the post-decolonization period, created by De Gaulle and Jacques Foccart. The Françafrique as it had been before Sarkozy did not change that much, even after promising that it would (Bovcon, M. 2011).

3.2.2. The Security-oriented African policy of François Hollande

In 2012, François Hollande became president and held with him the legacy of the PS (Parti Socialiste, the French Socialist Party) with such leaders like Mitterrand who also had an important impact on the Franco-African relations. From an outside point of view, it would be easy to think that the way to handle these relations depends on the political beliefs of the leader: for example Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy in the same group (right side) and François Mitterrand and François Hollande (left side) in the other one,

\(^7\) The 2011 military intervention in Libya was led by a NATO multi-state coalition following the French initiative with the purpose of getting a ceasefire in the Libyan civil war as well as putting an end to the attacks against civilians.

\(^8\) The Sarkozy-Gaddafi political campaign scandal started when Mediapart, a French online newspaper specialized in finding such controversial documents issued two documents which were suggesting a 50 million euro transfer for the presidential election campaign of Nicolas Sarkozy in 2007. (Mediapart, 2016)

\(^9\) Let us mention the Sarkozy-Gaddafi political campaign financing scandal of 2007 (see above).
representing the African policy of the PS. However, according to Yves Gounin, the French African policy does not depend on whether the leader is from the right side or the left side, but it is rather a “fight between the ancients and the moderns”. Gounin puts in the same basket Charles de Gaulle and Mitterrand, as well as the former African presidents like Félix Houphouët-Boigny. And in the other group, François Hollande, Nicolas Sarkozy and I would add Emmanuel Macron. Jacques Chirac may have been a transition between the ancients and the moderns (Gounin, 2009).

François Hollande and his team arrived in the Élysée in a difficult African context. Rise of protests in the Arab world, the ongoing French military operations and the critical African economy made clear that a strong policy line had to be drawn by Hollande’s government. This context might have influenced Hollande’s actions afterward. While talking about Hollande’s African political results, many people are insisting on the fact that his policies were too much oriented towards security. One of the main decisions of the former French president was to send troops in Mali in order to remove the Jihadist and the Tuareg armed forces which were marching towards the capital city. The intervention is said to be successful, but many scholars are criticizing one aspect of it. As Hollande’s African policy may have been focusing too much on security, the French government might have omitted to elaborate a more comprehensive approach in order to support the state reconstruction after the departure of the French army. Mali was a good opportunity to introduce an inclusive political settlement which could have provided a model for the region of an inclusive political system (Marchal, 2013). Three weeks later, Hollande was welcomed as a hero in Tombouctou, where he stated, “This is the most important day of my political life” (Le Monde-B, 2017). It was even more surprising based on the fact that Hollande had no known interest in Africa.

Hollande had a strong focus on security as a consequence of the terrorist attacks which happened in France during his mandate (Le journal du dimanche, 2013). At the beginning of his quinquennat10, he promised to put an end to Françafrique, as Nicolas Sarkozy did at the beginning of his mandate. Apparently, Hollande followed the path of his predecessor. Indeed, the security policy has quickly overtaken this promise and led to

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10 French expression which refers to a five-year presidential term.
favorize relations with security goals rather than pursuing the aim to end Françafrique. The French military forces played a major role in Hollande’s African policy. As mentioned above, the military intervention in Mali happened at the beginning of Hollande’s quinquennat. One year later, in December 2013, he launched the operation Sangaris\(^\text{11}\), in the Central African Republic. In terms of “memory”, Hollande was the president who had the greatest recognition of the past mistakes of France in Africa among the presidents since the end of World War II (WWII) (Le Monde-B, 2017).

To summarize this idea, the fact of promising the end of Françafrique is a typical French electoral campaign promise that every president is making since the word was invented and popularized in the hexagon by Félix Houphouët-Boigny. The one thing that ended with Hollande was what is so-called the “evening visitors” who were those African leaders who unofficially visited the Élysée to discuss African political matters. Nevertheless, François Hollande had “friends” who were interested in Africa and who had relations with African leaders. Hollande did not have any choice to use these relations and unofficial networks because the Franco-African relations have always worked this way (Le Monde-B, 2017).

However, François Hollande was the first president who did not have an “African Cell” as his predecessors had. Prior to his election, many people believed that he would be the one to put an end to Françafrique. Anyway, he did not use the traditional Françafrique networks. He appointed Hélène Le Gal as his African advisor. She is a diplomat who has great experience in West Africa. Such decisions do not fit with the traditional Françafrique networks. Hollande began apparently his mandate with a real will of making the Franco-African relations more transparent. Contrarily to his predecessor Nicolas Sarkozy, and in order to understand the motivations behind such interventions, it is advised to analyze it from a perspective of modern geopolitics instead of a neocolonial frame of reference. One thing which could have prevented Hollande to definitely end Françafrique is the other side of these relations. In Africa, political leaders such as Deby

\(^{11}\) French military intervention in the Central African Republic (CAR) from 2013 till 2016. CAR president François Bozizé requested international aid from both France and the United States in order to fight against a rebel movement called Séléka which has moved closer and closer from the capital city Bangui, reason why the help was requested by Bozizé.
in Chad and Nguesso in Congo-Brazzaville are both autocrats and have interests in keeping the Françafrique alive. Both are important partners for France. Congo-Brazzaville is an essential oil provider and Chad an important ally in the French “War on Terror” in Africa. When the day of the end of the Françafrique will come, it will have to be a simultaneous and multilateral decision (Chafer, T. 2014).

From one outside point of view, it is normal to wonder why Africa matters so much for the French state. Well, from an internal point of view, it is really common to wonder why France invests so much there. From a French perspective, the first answer that will come to mind is the common history. But if we think about it from a realist point of view, the economic interest might come first, and this is the main problem. It is neither obvious nor proved that the French economy depends on the African one. However, the African one, based on the currency which many states are using, and which is made in France, the franc CFA, means that the African economy depends on the French one (Deutsche Welle, 2017).

3.2.3. The African Policy of Emmanuel Macron: Macron in Ouagadougou

When Emmanuel Macron became president in 2017, the French African policy has taken a new direction. At least, that is what we were believing. Macron said that he was “from a generation that would not tell Africans what to do” (BBC News, 2017). On November 28th, 2017, the newly elected French president went to present what the French policy towards Africa during his mandate will be, by answering the questions of the local students for two hours in the amphitheater of a university in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, a former French colony. Besides the long introduction emphasizing the fact that France is no longer a colonial power, the part we will focus on describes Macron’s natural behavior. In the questions and answers part of the presentation, which is not written on paper and requires improvisation, truth or simply acting abilities, many people spotted the most relevant information of the intervention, which made the newspaper headlines on both shores of the Mediterranean. He concluded his introduction by mentioning the power cuts which are affecting the university and uses this topic to say “Tomorrow we will open a power plant. I said that the commitment of France in sustainable energy and the investment we promised to do in entrepreneurship, in the
companies in order to help Burkina Faso and all the countries of the region to develop energy and to fight, purposely against the power cuts”. The wave of criticism started with what followed this statement. He finished his answer to the question of one student by saying “You talk to me like if I was the president of Burkina Faso!” Later in the same sentence; “You speak to me like if I was still a colonial power” Before saying “I do not want to take care of the electricity in the universities in Burkina Faso! It is the work of the president.” Then the president left to the bathroom, which led to Emmanuel Macron saying, “So he goes, stay here!” before adding “So, he went repairing the air conditioner.” (La tribune Afrique, 2017).

A deep analysis of the non-verbal language of the actors and the deep meaning of such a situation would be required to know everything about what really happened there. Nevertheless, it went down as a scandal in both France and Burkina Faso, highlighting the possibility of a diplomatic incident even if the actors involved, mainly the Burkinabe president, stated that there have been neither incident nor disrespect. Knowing the tendency of French presidents to act with condescendence towards African leaders, many newspapers of the opposition or in Burkina Faso mentioned a neocolonialist behavior from the French president. But looking at the content, the contrast between this “incident” and the rest is almost like an oxymoron (La Tribune Afrique, 2017).

The rest of the speech was as relevant to analyze as the possible incident. In the beginning, the president said, “I did not come to tell you about the French African policy because there is no more African policy of France.” The beginning of it was strongly characterized by a wish of rupture with colonial paternalism. Later in the speech, the discussion quickly went back to the traditional security matters of the region, like it was a priority for his predecessor Hollande. Indeed, France still has ongoing operations in Sahel countries\(^\text{12}\). New president, but the same goal for the French military\(^\text{13}\), which requires a

\(^\text{12}\) The ongoing French operation “Barkhane” in Sahel mobilizes 3500 French and 12 000 ONU troops and started in 2013, on the initiative of France. (Ministère des armées, 2014)

\(^\text{13}\) As the military goal during Hollande quinquennat were mostly counter-terrorism, I meant by this sentence that E. Macron military goals remain the same than its predecessor.
legitimization in the eyes of the locals. In my opinion that is why he quickly mentioned the challenges that Africa is facing nowadays such as terrorism, economic development and climate change. He directly addressed his talks to “the generation which is condemned to succeed” to challenges like I just mentioned. To go back to the security aspect of the speech, he said: “France has always been alongside Africa when its stability was at stake as well as Africa was alongside France when the French one was.” He also complimented François Hollande for the intervention against terrorism in Mali. Here is one aspect of the Françafrique which just cannot be removed. The military involvement of France has become something normal and is rarely earning criticism about being in Africa. This military involvement will be analyzed in another part of my thesis (La Tribune Afrique, 2017).

Back then, we were at the early stage of Emmanuel Macron’s mandate. It was considered for some as the introduction of what will be the African policy of Emmanuel Macron. The French newspaper used to write articles only about the possible diplomatic incident with the Burkinabe president while forgetting their duty to report the whole intervention. The choices of topics that the president has decided to talk about are important, still following this logic of introduction of what will be his African policy during his mandate.

Generally, his promises were fulfilled or are being fulfilled. He acted in favor of the reconciliation of the memories between France and the former colonies. He promised in Ouagadougou to restore the African heritage in Africa within 5 years. On November 24th, 2018, he made the decision to give back 26 works of art to Benin, which were taken by France during the colonial era. Nevertheless, there are around 90 000 artworks of sub-Saharan African origin in the French museums. It is yet hard to know if the project of the president is really to give back each one of these. This first step has a really symbolic meaning, which is both an invitation to enter into dialogue with Africa as well as a recognition of the colonial mistakes of France (Le Parisien, 2018). The promise to increase by 0.55% of the GDP the help from France to the French Official Development Assistance (ODA) is also happening, materialized by a 1 billion euro raise of the budget of the French Development Agency. Politically, beside the “diplomatic incident” in Ouagadougou, there is only one move that must be considered since the beginning of the mandate. This is the election in October 2018 of the head of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie. Indeed, the Rwandan citizen Louise Mushikiwabo was
elected, partly thanks to the huge support from Paris. It might also have been a smart move from Macron, 25 years after the end of the Rwandan genocide, of which the involvement of France is often and still criticized. It could lead to normalizing the relations with the Rwandan president Paul Kagame, who is today one of the most influent political leaders of the continent (Le Monde-C, 2018).

Nevertheless, it is too early for the evaluation of the French African policy during Macron’s mandate. There is one big detail which must be taken into consideration while analyzing and comparing the different African policies of the former French presidents with that of Macron. Namely that he did not have to face any greater crisis in Africa. Since he was elected in 2017, Paris did not have to handle any coup d’état, rigged election, death of a potential ally, neither situations which could really allow us to judge the evolutions of Macron’s African policy. His predecessors (François Hollande and Nicolas Sarkozy) probably did not imagine after taking office, directly having to send French troops in the streets of Abidjan to allow the assumption of office of Alassane Ouattara, the actual Ivorian president or in Mali’s desert to counter a jihadist attack (Le Monde-D, 2018).
4. The French presence in French-speaking Africa

4.1. The French economic policy in Africa

There are many factors characterizing the economic relations between France and Africa. It is important to consider that it is linked with the evolution of both economies but most importantly with the colonial and postcolonial past of both actors. Such policies tend to change because of the introduction of new actors such as the Asian superpowers and the new objectives of France, oriented towards both global and European markets, especially with Emmanuel Macron’s focus on Europe. Nevertheless, France remains one of the most important economic actors in Africa, with a strong network still operating, heritage from the Françafrique system created during the Charles De Gaulle era.

4.1.1. The Franco-African economic settings after the decolonization

In the second half of the 20th century, the French economic policy in Sub-Saharan Africa was the representation of the geopolitical importance that Africa represented for France in the Charles De Gaulle era. In this period, Paris was afraid that the African states would get closer and closer from the Soviets or the Americans. Although, both the United States of America and the Soviet Union considered as an important process the decolonization in North Africa, because of their respective interests in the region and a higher interest in their relations with the former colonial power, namely France (Zoubir, Y. 1995). This fear led to the creation of help and budget support which revealed itself being really important for the French-speaking African regimes. The African states concerned by this help have in return granted to the French state space for the diplomacy and the army which allowed France to have a real influence there. Without this space, France might not have had such an impact on the economic development of the region. Back then, for the French economy, Africa was important (Schraeder, 2000). The fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 added to other events like Europe getting bigger and globalization speeding up was the reason why France has lost economic interest in Africa. In a way, it contributed to the normalization of the Franco-African relations, knowing that Africa did not represent as
much as Europe could represent at this time. Back then, the speech of François Mitterrand at La Baule in 1990, where he said the French help to Africa was linked with the democratization of the African states, followed by the devaluation of the Franc CFA (the currency of the French-speaking states) have played a role in African states losing trust in France (RFI Afrique, 2016).

4.1.2. The French economic policies in Africa since 1989

The beginning of the 21st century under Lionel Jospin’s government policy is considered as an important milestone of the Franco-African relations. The multiple conflicts, the terrorist threats in a post-September 11 world, the growing presence of the United States and China as well as the global quest for natural resources led to the increase of the importance of Africa in the eyes of France and the rest of the world (Ellis & Killingray, 2002). This increasing significance oriented the policy of Jacques Chirac’s government. The Official Development Assistance (ODA) given by Paris to Africa has known a budget increase under his command. The interesting fact concerning the French economic policy after this budget increase is that it was not followed by lots of investments in Africa from the French operators, even though many Asians and Americans did. People at this time began to wonder if such a French economic policy in Africa, which would be the heritage of the French empire really exists. Some doubts were also caused by the French companies concerning their interest in Africa because of their new objectives of globalization, which might have driven them to lose interest in the African markets as well. This loss of interest is still continuing today. A study from Coface noticed that France is not the first exporter on the continent anymore. Indeed, its market share on the continent has been halved between 2000 and 2017 (Gradt, 2018).

Today, the French African economic policy is really different from the one that France adopted just after the decolonization. In the 1950s, the French colonial empire represented 60% of the foreign trade (Marseille, 1984). After the decolonization, a challenge appeared for the French state which consisted in keeping the economic control of the region while being officially “out” of its former colonies. That is the time when the postcolonial state has taken up the torch. Its policy was focusing on natural resources and for example foreign trade. In this perspective, the French aid has been really important in favoring the
investments in these postcolonial states. More than being important, it was a necessity. The function of the French aid was to finance the State institutions and the public companies in order to favorize State-based capitalism which could lead the newly independent states to safely emancipate themselves from the colonial economy. This need for change objectively wanted by Paris can be explained by the rise of financial capitalism and European construction. Indeed, during the colonial period, the French strategy in Africa was oriented towards “simple” rentier economy that was beneficial only for some markets, like the import-export for example. The French economic interest for Africa and the African one for France has decreased in the last 30 years. Actually, most of the people think the contrary mostly because of the common past. The numbers are relevant to understand this tendency. In 2017, the percentage of exports from France towards Africa was 6%, while 59% went to the European Union (EU). For the imports, it was even less. 4% from Africa, while 61% came from the EU (DSEE, 2018). This loss of interest led to the emergence of new actors, claiming the part that France left over the years. With the purpose of highlighting the rising importance of these new actors, the China-Africa research initiative website from the John Hopkins school of international studies provide a whole range of data. The simple existence of such websites shows the relevance of the economic importance of China in Africa. To give an order of idea on the overview of the trade data, here are some that I found on this website. The amount of Chinese export towards Africa in 2015 was 150 billion dollars, while the amount of African export towards China in 2014 was around 110 billion dollars (UN Comtrade, 2017). Nevertheless, the French-African economic relations remain relevant, besides the amount decrease of the last decades. In terms of benefit, it even represents a cozy commercial surplus for Paris. In 2017 it was 1.2 billion euro.

4.1.3. The French withdrawal from Africa?

In the last decade, we could notice the safe and continuous presence of the French oil companies, justified by their geographical knowledge of the region, a legacy of the monopolies of the colonial era. In other words, the African markets are really relevant for the French companies. They are benefitting by one really important mechanism in Sub-Saharan Africa, a strong advantage, also a heritage from the colonial empire. This mechanism is the single currency in the countries of the so-called “Franc” zone. They are
also benefiting from the support of the French state as well as a monetary cooperation and the support of a French institution called French Company of Insurance for Foreign Trade. All this support and economic systems give to the French companies a competitive edge that the other countries do not have, at least in Sub-Saharan Africa and in the Franc zone. It is also important to understand that the French decreasing economic involvement in Africa is voluntary and wanted by Paris. The “small” actual economic policy in Africa is still really efficient compared to the investments that France is doing nowadays in Africa. It is the results of such advantages I listed above. French companies are still seating on a comfortable postcolonial seat, as France never really left these countries, it always has had such economic advantages. It withdrew itself in terms of economic matters from Africa because of the rising importance of new actors like the European Union, which thanks to the common market or the Schengen space are justifying this withdrawal but, the different economic agreements, the Franc zone will remain in the region and can be the basis of a new strong economic policy in Africa if such markets like the European one ceased to be interesting. It can be roughly considered as an economic backup plan (Saul, 2012).

Furthermore, there are some other French actors who benefited from these advantages at the end of the 20th century which are relevant and very active in Africa today. In the electric and water companies like Bouygues or Vivendi used this aid to sign new contracts in the region. There is a sector on which Sub-Saharan Africa relies its development and it is of course petrol, with the number one French company Total. Around one-quarter of the petrol which goes in France is coming from Africa. In other words, Total has a really strong presence there and needs to use all the tools available to maintain it. Petrol, water, electricity and petrol are not the only sectors where France has great opportunities, and these thanks to the Franc zone: This is the bank sector. Three major French banks are well-installed in the area. Their market share is even reaching a level which is around 70% of the total bank market in the region (Franc zone). Those banks are the Crédit Lyonnais, the National Bank of Paris and the Société Générale (Hugon, 1999).

Besides this sector, there is an overall tendency in which the French companies were withdrawing themselves from Africa in the first decade of the 21st century. As mentioned above, the globalization has an impact on most of the sectors which is provoking this withdrawal. Another category is relevant to understand the new tendencies of
investments, even if it is changing on a year-to-year basis. The top investing countries in Africa by capital investment in 2016 were China (with a huge market share of 39%, way ahead from the other investing countries) followed by a quite new investor which is the United Arab Emirates (12%) and then Morocco (5%). Still, in the top 10, we can find the United States (4%) and the former colonial empire, the United Kingdom (3%). Another surprising investor in the top can be found ahead of the United Kingdom; Saudi Arabia (4%), which might follow the path of the United Arab Emirates. In this top, I did not find France as a relevant investor. However, the graph shows another important data when evaluating the economic participation in the region, and this data is the top investing countries in Africa by the number of ongoing projects. And here we find France in top 2 with 71 ongoing projects in 2016, following the United States (83 projects). Then, we can find China (62) and the United Kingdom (37) and again, the United Arab Emirates (34) (Global financial Times, 2017). When observing these data, we have the confirmation that France invests less in Africa but is still trying to maintain a strong economic presence as well as having a backup plan for when Africa will be the new economic destination. We can already see that superpowers like the United States, China and even the Middle East (United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia) are preparing the future by investing capital there.

4.1.4. The different French economic advantages in Africa

Between the different economic advantages at the disposal of France, there is one we will focus on, which symbolizes, in my opinion, the real Françafrique while having a deep neocolonial meaning. It is the Franc CFA (CFA: Colonies françaises d’Afrique).

The role and purpose of the Franc CFA are really complex. It has never been deeply explained by the French government. When it was created, Paris has “claimed” that it was just too complicated to explain, so there has always been a problem of transparency concerning this controversial currency. The Franc was created in 1945. To be more accurate, two “different” currencies were created but they had similar use. There was one Franc CFA for one monetary union of Africa. Both had, as an acronym “CFA” but not the same meaning (Pigeaud & Ndonga Samba, pp. 6-7).
• The first monetary union is the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), with its currency called Franc of the African Financial Community.
• The second is the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) and its currency, the Franc of the Financial Cooperation in Central Africa.

Before that, in the French empire, it was the metropolitan Franc which was circulating in the biggest part of the empire. But on the day of December 25th, 1945, the decree number 45-0136\textsuperscript{14}, signed by the provisional government of Charles De Gaulle, the ministers of Finance and the minister of the Colonies, the Franc CFA (which originally was called Franc of the French African Colonies, as mentioned above) was published. It is driven by four great principles, which are:

1. Fixed parity
2. Free transfer
3. Unlimited convertibility
4. Centralization of the foreign reserve assets

The first principle is basically that the Franc CFA is deeply linked to the French currency, does not matter which is the current currency in France. The Comorian and Franc CFA have the French currency as an anchor. It means that the value of these currencies does not vary depending on the economic circumstances. This principle can have effects such as overestimate or underestimate the real value of the currency. Most of the time, it did overestimate it.

The second principle (free transfer) means that the current transactions such as payment of imports and exports or the remittances, or the capital movements are free in the Franc

\textsuperscript{14} This decree was published in the official journal of the French Republic on December 26\textsuperscript{th}, 1945 (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 2016).
zone. In other words that it is not submitted to any exchange restriction (Pigeaud & Ndongo Samba, 2018, pp. 38).

The third principle, the unlimited convertibility, is ensured by the French Treasury\(^\text{15}\). What is ensured exactly is that the Franc CFA and Comorian\(^\text{16}\) can both be exchanged with the French currency without any limitation. This insurance provided by the French treasury was made possible by all the agreements signed by it and the Central African banks of the France zone. The treasury is also committed to providing to the central African banks as many loans as they need in order for them to always have a sufficient amount of currency in order to pay the external payments for instance. It also aims at ensuring that the free transfer is never limited in the Franc zone (Pigeaud & Ndongo Samba, 2018, pp. 39).

The fourth principle, the centralization of the foreign reserve assets, has evolved since decolonization but remains a legacy from the colonial times. According to this principle: The Franc zone, more precisely the WAEMU and CEMAC have to deposit a part of their foreign assets in France at the French treasury. Directly after the independences, the total of assets due to the treasury was 100%, except for the minimum cash flow needed for the operations between the Franc zone countries and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and some other exceptions. It dropped to 65% at the beginning of the 1970s before dropping to 50% in 2005 for the WAEMU and 2007 for the BEAC. Since then, they had the possibility to place the other half of their foreign assets in other accounts which would have been opened for example outside the European Union. This centralization is the counterparty of the guarantee of unlimited convertibility ensured by the French treasury to the members of the Franc zone. The benefits which were created by such principle are multidimensional. The first one is vertical because it is linking France and the African states by the guarantee of unlimited convertibility. The second is horizontal because it is creating a link between the different African member states. The wealthiest countries of

\[^{15}\text{The French treasury is responsible for the accountancy of the French state and is also helping with the accountancy of the local governments and the public administrations.}\]

\[^{16}\text{The Comorian Franc has been established at the same time with the Franc CFA as well as carrying the same principles. It is still today the official currency of Comoros.}\]
the zone; the ones who have the most currencies are granting to the poorest the possibility to rely on their comfortable situation by the mean of the so-called “common pot”. It is also important to say that France is part of the Franc zone but does not place its foreign assets in the same “common pot” (Pigeaud & Ndongo Samba, 2018, pp. 40).

The main question, which remains unanswered is how this system of Franc CFA does for contributing to the interests of France, in other words, according to what it is the best economic weapon of the Françafrique since its creation. Its relevance speaks by itself, the longevity of such a system throughout time and the willingness of the French state to keep it as it is, as well as acting in order for the member countries of the Franc zone not to leave it, shows great French consideration for it. Indeed, after all, the system permits the French state to easily extract primary resources there, and for the companies, the possibility to easily repatriate their profits made in the zone. On the one hand, already in the second half of the 20th century, it was said that the system brings a lot of currency to France, of which a part is a way to pay back the existing trade deficit between the actors (Canac & Contreras, 2011).

Another advantage has emerged thanks to the free transfer principle: it is the fact that French interests are guaranteed to sustain in Africa. Back then, it was made possible to buy raw materials with French Franc (still now, but France is buying it in Euro). These results were of course not surprising. As one of the major decisions concerning the former colonies just after decolonization, the main objective of such a system was to contribute to the French economic interests in Africa. And it is even less surprising that it is still going in that direction, as it were no major changes or update since its creation. The actors benefiting from the system also did not change, namely France and the French companies. Paying the raw materials with its own currency is also an advantage, no matter whether with the old Franc or the Euro, it granted France the possibility to save its foreign assets. With keeping a vertical relationship with the other members of the zone, France has progressively had the possibility to maintain its position as one of the main creditors in the zone, from the creation of the system until. On each loan granted to a member, Paris gets capital as well as keeping pressure tactics over the debtors (Harshe, 1980).

To this prominent position of creditor, there can be more than one explanation. On the one hand, the stability of the exchange rate granted by the principle of fixed parity which favorizes the loans taken in the anchor currency (which is the Euro), because it is less
risky to take a loan in Euro thanks to this principle; as the exchange rate is fixed and does not depend on the economic circumstances, as mentioned before. On the other hand, the system is such that the member states have advantages to take external loans, instead of between them, forcing them to have external debts for contributing to their own development. The neocolonialist aspect of such a system might explain this dependency on foreign actors, instead of granting real economic independence to the member states. Finally, the most relevant explanation: the political dimension of the Franc CFA. It basically places the member states under the French government tutelage, which is “forcing” them to turn to France for any aid application (Pigeaud & Ndongo Samba, 2018, pp. 136).

As the French economic policy in Africa concerns both the French state and the French companies, the system could not have been created without representing a benefit for the companies. Throughout time, the system of the Franc CFA has created great opportunities for the companies, by granting them the possibility to sign contracts in the Franc zone. The different loans made by France for the development of the African states implies the fact that most of the time, France will greatly influence the destination of such investments. And of course, most of the time, the destination of such investments will be economically interesting for the companies. For instance, back in 2017, companies like Bouygues and Alstom did get the right to create and exploit a metro line in Abidjan, the capital city of Ivory Coast, contract with a total value reaching 1.4 billion euro, all this financed by a loan from the French government (Vidzraku, 2017).

The Franc zone consists of 15 member African states and has a deep connection with France, the WAEMU and the CEMAC. In economic terms, this zone is granting an equal dimension between the member states. It has been created by France during the colonial era in order to isolate the French empire from the international market and become something like an advantageous trade space after the world crisis in the late 1920s. There is something which can be emphasized about the zone: It is its longevity, considering the geopolitical and regime changes that it has known throughout the years. It survived decolonization, the arrival of new superpowers in the region, the French currency change from the Franc to the Euro, and most of all the infamous devaluation of the Franc CFA in 1994 (which is remembered by Africa as one of the worst decisions in the Franco-
African relations, see first part of the thesis). Through this complicated history, it had the capacity to evolve, despite the outside interferences (N’galadjo Bamba, 1997).

This evolution has transformed the zone compared to what it was at the beginning. It was considered when it was created as a preferential trade space between the member states (and France) but it turned to be way more than this. With everything that happened in that area and around, it naturally became a great financial space. The new aims of such cooperation were the defense of the currency, real monetary cooperation and those aims were fulfilled thanks to the members in addition to strengthen the institution itself. Different events contributed to how the Franc Zone is today. First the devolution of the Franc CFA, the focus on the regional integrations and the creation of strict policies and prudential regulations, orchestrated by the regional banks which have withdrawn themselves from the dependency on the political powers. Most importantly, the African monetary unions could also be less dependent from the French Treasury, which is the most relevant development of the zone. When in the Hexagon, the euro was implemented, some changes occurred concerning the links between the French treasury and the African central banks, principally in terms of transparency, because the European Central Bank had the right of reviewing those African Banks, because of the new link between the CFA and the Euro, as it was a condition for this link. It is important to highlight the fact that the implementation of the Euro did not cancel the relations between the French treasury and the African banks. It shows the French will to keep the economic control over the Franc Zone while strengthening its relations with Europe by adopting the common currency (Lelart, 2003).

The French development aid ODA (Official Development Assistance) is also a really interesting tool for the economic participation of France Africa. Since its creation at the end of the decolonization process, with the aim to contain the growing Soviet influence, the ODA has known a quick growth in the 1970s, (from 11 billion dollars in 1972 to 40 billion dollars in 1990.) Since the second part of the 20th century, Africa has perceived an increasing part of the aid. In the late 1960s, beginning of the 1970s, during the Vietnam war, the ODA had another major beneficiary. Africa was at that time only getting a third of the total amount. Almost half of it, of course, was going to Asia, because of the context. As the years went by, the tendency changed. During the year 1990, Africa had almost half, and Asia got a third of it. In the late 1990s, the contributors began to wonder if this
aid was efficient and if it was fulfilling its promises. Following these doubts, the value of the aid then dropped to 25 billion dollars in 1999 (Seillan, 2010).

Afterward, it mostly continued to drop. Even though, in 2006, the percentage of aid was 0.47% of the French GDP, compared to 0.31% in 2001, it was the results some numbers manipulation and credit freezing, which might have been done in order to legitimize the fact that this aid is still existing, almost a century after its creation (Hugon, 2007). What is sure, is that since its high value in 1990 it has continuously decreased. And this can have two explanations. The first one is that it is an old process which was introduced in a neocolonial spirit, in order for the people of France or Africa to believe in support from Paris to the political and economic transition of the former colonies (and more generally all underdeveloped African countries). The second possibility, according to postcolonial studies, is that it exists a disengagement from France vis a vis Africa. Economic of course, but most of the time, we can consider aid like the ODA, as a channel for diplomatic influence. The diplomatic utility of such aid could explain the reason why France has interest to act like the ODA was still increasing and efficient after years of doubt. Anyway, France is still a major contributor (Freud, 2011).

It is interesting to analyze the geographical data of the ODA. As mentioned above Africa is benefiting the most from it, then, it goes to the other poor countries around the globe. Before, the main reason why Paris granted a bigger part of the ODA to one country is the economic interest which France had in the country. Anyway, and without any surprises, the biggest beneficiaries are the Sub-Saharan countries, mostly French-speaking (followed by Northern African countries). All this aid process can be gathered in the French Cooperation Policy (Balleix, 2010). It refers to the ODA of course but more generally to the Franco-African relations and the institutional links between the actors. The new kind of policy towards Africa which Paris adopted in the late 1990s is the result of several factors and wishes from the former colonizer. There were many hopes concerning Africa and Françafrique as we entered the new millennium: The first desire was to reduce the number of decision-making centers as it began a mess when it comes to organization and repartition of such resources like the ODA, as well as stopping the clientelist relations that were really popular during the golden age of the Françafrique. Most of all, the principal motivation was to cut the controversial relations with the former colonies. Some economic reforms occurred at this time like the creation of the Zone of
Priority Aid in order for the French contributors and citizens to build confidence among the efficiency of the ODA but also to have a fair distribution of capital. (Hugon, P. 2007) With the election of Jacques Chirac in 2002, the French cooperation adopted quite a new strategy. It turned to be more interventionist than it used to be. The military role of France will be detailed in the next part, but it is important to say that contrarily to the common thinking about French interventionism, military interventions are most of the time not linked with economic interests. As for an example, countries like Chad, where France does not have any economic interest, was still a milestone of the French military interventionism in Africa.

One of the main focus of the ODA is debt relief. France agreed on forgetting about some debt obligations for the African countries the most in need of capital. In a larger scale, the French economic policy directed itself towards cooperation, with a prioritization over civil society, participative and representative democracy, a bit like the French model. Most of all, there was a wish for legitimizing cooperation and making aid more effective. If we take into consideration the previous policies, it was a step forward to the end of the traditional economic Françafrique. France also developed aid for ecological matters and access the healthcare in Africa, even though we might not forget that sometimes what is said and what is done can differ, a matter of public opinion (Hugon, P. 2007).

4.1.5. The multidimensional status of the French economic influence in Africa

The Franco-African economic relations cannot be resumed only to this dimension. There are other topics that have a strong influence on the relations between the actors. For many years now, migration has had a strong impact on both economies. On the one hand, manpower. Of course, unskilled labor was a need for blue collar jobs, but there also was a need for skilled labor. As it can be with today’s Hungary, the countries who had the best education began to worry about the brain drain of Africans towards the former colonies. To give an example, countries of Central Africa, which have, compared to other African regions a most developed educational and university system are concerned by this tendency.
A division in terms of focus can be done while comparing the different features of the French policy in Africa. The military and the political and cultural pillars can be dissociated from the economic pillar which consists of defending French interests. Indeed, contrarily to the latter, the French-speaking countries are being favored by these other pillars, with for example more military bases, more military interventions, more significant ODA contribution, creation of diplomatic alliances, while the French economic interests are located in South Africa, Nigeria or even Angola. From this conclusion, we can highlight an increasing division between the French geopolitical and economic interests (Hugon, 2007).

4.1.6. The impact of globalization on French economic policy in Africa

If we talk about the place of Africa within the global market, it is difficult to include it as a major actor of it. The main African global influence is cultural. Its relevancy though, is strong, because of its natural resources. It has known many different foreign influences. The French economic influence in Africa has changed a lot since the end of WWII. The fact that former French Africa got more and more involved in global trade, still because of its natural resources, also highlighted the fact that the decolonization process was over. Economically talking, the number of “partners” of former French Africa is huge, it does not limit itself with France anymore. Because during the colonial period, and even during the decolonization process, there was one major economic “partner” of French-speaking Africa, and it was the no one else but the former colonizer. At the beginning of the new millennium, Africa has known an economic change thanks to the global economic institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), new economic policies coming from the European Union, the pressure from the great powers as well in order for the African States to allow big companies for a greater privatization in Africa. In overall terms, most of the millennial reforms were done in order for the economic relations between Africa and the rest of the world to become more open to competition between foreign actors. Taking these new settings into consideration, the French State also had to evolve towards a multilateral economic policy. The French companies, of which some were already really involved in globalization, have taken the opportunity of this new policy. These companies could focus and have interesting offers concerning the privatization reforms in Africa. These privatizations, contrarily to the
common thinking, did not jeopardize the French economic influence in the region, it rather was beneficial for it. If the State had less and less influence over the African economies, the French companies could take up the torch (Nellis, 2003). As mentioned before in the essay, the other actors such as China has become the most influential actors, more than the former colonizer states. In terms of loans, China is now far ahead of France. To the perception of the citizens of French-speaking Africa (as well as for French people), it has led to some kind of standardization of the economic relations between France and Africa, and it was a big step towards the end of the traditional Françafrique. (Renou, 2002).

The French companies knew how to benefit from the new situation of Africa. But when mentioning the French companies, we cannot include all of them. The most benefiting type of companies are the biggest ones. What followed the new economic situation there at the beginning of the 2000s led to many of these companies leaving and coming back to France (especially small and medium ones) (Le Pape & Vidal, 2003). But the big ones, such as Total, knew how to use this opportunity. The common belief in the Hexagon concerning the arrival of new actors in Africa was that it would make France and French companies lose their advantageous position in the former colonies. But there can be another definition to it. Let us see it simple. We could think that if other countries arrived and decided to take a piece of the African cake of France, France would have less cake after the arrival of the new actors. But it would not be a loss if the cake grew bigger than when France was “alone”. Alexandre Vilgrain, CEO of the agribusiness group Simdia said in December 2013 to the newspaper Jeune Afrique “The French people had quasi-monopoly situations, which was not sustainable. In view of the quick growth rates in the region, it is normal that our markets shares are decreasing. What is essential is that our sales revenue is growing.” (Deltombe et al., 2014). There is an ongoing and whole new “rush to Africa” which started at the beginning of the millennium. Concerning the French influences, the sectors which benefited the most from the new economic settings are the agrobusiness and telecommunication. Those sectors are indeed benefiting from the growing Chinese activities as service providers. On the other hand, this increase of Chinese activities is not relevant for companies such as Bolloré (port and rail logistics) or even Sodexo, which provide services to mine operators.
In its African “backyard” (French-speaking African countries) the sectors in which the French companies are operating is really diverse. In 2012, we had over 45 branches of French companies present in almost all the different economic sectors. For instance, the construction industry (Bouygues), the banks of course (BNP Paribas….), Transports (Air France….), distribution, commerce (Total…), Insurance (AGF-Allianz…), and this, only in Burkina Faso! The same applies to countries like Gabon, Togo, Congo-Brazzaville or even Cameroon, and so on (Deltombe et al., 2014).

4.1.7. The French neocolonialist behavior and its impact on the economy in Africa

According to the logic and all the data we have, we can agree that the arrival of new actors in the African economy is an opening to competition and now the question is how their country would be favorized instead of another, because of colonial roots for instance. There is a high doubt concerning the fact that countries such as the French-speaking ones would cut the privileged links they had with Paris. Indeed, today’s Franco-African relations do not limit themselves to simple economic competition. As in former French Africa, the political leader can have a direct impact on the economy because of the authoritarian nature that many of them have. It is easy to link the economy with politics, and it is with politics that there is a high suspicion about the neocolonial manners of former colonizer states like France. In order to illustrate such recurrent doubts, here is the last case where there are high doubts about political interference from the French diplomacy concerning African elections. On the 10th of January 2019 the Congolese citizens knew the winner of the presidential elections that were held on December 30th, 2019. The candidate of the opposition Félix Tshisekedi became the new president of Congo, after 23 years of the Kabila’s family presidency. And to this, the French minister of Foreign affairs Jean-Yves Le Drian had a really controversial comment on a TV panel: “It seems like the declared results are not correct” before adding that the “episcopal conference of Congo did some research and communicated totally different results”. These declarations led to the reaction of many Congolese people, claiming that it is political interference and that it never happens the other way around, when French elections are held, African people do not interfere. It also led of course to the answer from the newly elected governments and especially its spokesperson Lambert Mendé who said, “No matter what could come out from the deliberations of the constitutional court, I
strongly condemn the fact that a foreign dignitary can have such remarks towards Congolese actions” (Belsoeur, 2019). Following these statements, the UN recognized the elections as legitimate, contrarily to France. Indeed, France did not have any observer in Kinshasa or anywhere else in the country to be able to justify the statements of Le Drian. Most of the scholars or citizens from Congo who reacted to this statement are calling for any foreign interference not to happen. Most of them, no matter from which political side, agree on the fact that Congo has to deal with its elections by itself and itself only. Such doubts about French interference are quite common, even nowadays, no matter who is at the head of French diplomacy. In this century already, many elections have led to think that Paris contributed to it. For instance, the election of the 85-year-old Paul Biya for a seventh mandate in Cameroun in October 2018. And it does not concern diplomacy only. In the past, the French interference in African elections granted the “democratic” status to some authoritarian regimes. This support included the French police and military cooperation to the repressive forces of these regimes.

In other words, to resume with the economic aspect of all of this: if we add the fact that France does still interfere in African politics, the strategic positions of the French companies in the region and the monetary tutelage caused by the franc CFA which is controlled by France, it leads us to the conclusion that France has a really privileged economic situation in the region even with the emergence of new and powerful actors such as China.

4.1.8. The developing French economy in North Africa: the case of Algeria

West and Central Africa are not the only places were France is betting for its economic future. It took time to recognize the opportunity that Paris had, thanks to the French cultural hegemony provided by the language and the many institutions left by France after decolonization However, a strong economic settlement would have been perceived by the Algerians who lived the decolonization as a neocolonialist behavior, disrespectful from the many lives lost during the war. No matter what, the spirit of the Algerian war could make any French policy in North Africa controversial. The main opportunity for France to increase the French economic influence there is to develop win-win relations. Besides this, the control over these policies has to be Algerian and not French. Such a
development of the relations did not fit with French Republican presidents’ beliefs such as Nicolas Sarkozy. For instance, during his mandate, the Franco-Algerian relations did not improve significantly. Only socialists were capable of such a move without any form of provocation, and so did François Hollande. The main decisions have been made during the visit in Alger of the former president back in 2012. Besides being socialist, the profile of François Hollande has granted him the possibility to become an actor of the Franco-Algerian rapprochement. Indeed, president Hollande did his ENA (École Nationale d’Administration) internship in Alger as well as going several times in Algeria between 2006 and 2011 as a representative of his party, the Socialist Party (PS). He was considered by the Algerian the president who was the closest from their country since decolonization. In this meeting in 2012, the choice of enforcing a partnership in view of a brighter future for both countries has been made. These decisions have been welcomed by the people of both countries (Pecastaing, 2013).

However, it did not erase the strong feeling of Algerians towards French regarding the war. For instance, the controversy about which day should be chosen to commemorate the victims of the war happened during his mandate. This controversy, about the choice of the 19th of March, which represents the day when Algerian called for a ceasefire, was criticized by the Republicans because of the thousands French and Harkis who died after this ceasefire. Indeed, this decision has been made following a socialist initiative, and it led to the division of opinion within and country and overseas in Algeria. It contributed to rekindling tensions between the countries (Perrault, 2013). It is fair to say that even with the controversial common past, both actors never stopped interacting with each other.

As for any French economic policy on the continent, there is a reason why the efforts are made here and not somewhere else. The particular case of Algeria is also linked to the past, on another extent, compared with Sub-Saharan Africa. Because of the difficult decolonization, France could not leave strong institutions such as the Franc zone and the

17 ENA (National School of Administration) is the school where most of the French politicians have studied.

18 Algerian soldiers loyal to the French during the Algerian war of independence.
Franc CFA, which granted to the former colonizer the possibility to have a prominent role over the control of the local economy. Algeria has its own currency, its own central banks and does not depend on France for any economic matter. The strongest French assets in Algeria remains cultural. But as we will see with the results I will highlight later in this part, the French economic policy in Algeria is directly linked with logic, as the cultural influence should precede any economic initiative. According to an estimation made by the former French ambassador in Algeria, Bernard Emié, the number of French people who have a connection with Algeria (Harkis, Blackfoot\textsuperscript{19}, immigrants…) is around seven million people. Even if in France the veracity of this number was contested, the real amount might not differ too much. These strong personal links, of course, come with economic ones. Indeed, the French state is the first investor (except for hydrocarbon) in the country. Paris also comes at the 4\textsuperscript{th} place as a customer of Algeria (more than four billion euro of imports). It is fair and nice to see that the new Franco-Algerian relations led to bilateral economic relations. The amount of exchange between both countries was around 10.5 billion euro in 2014, as France is the second economic partner of Algeria. There again, China has become the first supplier. But France, could take back its leader position by developing the economic relations as it is planned. The place of Algeria in the exports from the Hexagon is also relevant, as it represents an amount of 6.4 billion euro per year. It means that it is the third world destination of French exports but the first in Africa. Yes, surprisingly, even above the African members states of the Franc zone. Nevertheless, the main reason might be the geographical closeness of the two countries (Forson, 2016).

If the Françafrique went to disappear, a new French economic chapter could be written with a focus on Algeria and on a larger scale, North Africa. The economic focus on Sub-Saharan Africa is due to the past and the neocolonial systems installed after decolonization. But the strong cultural links between Paris and Alger could lead to a win-win relation and could become an example of post-neocolonial policy leading to the decline of the French economic control over the former colonies. This decline could be the basis of safe and long-termed relations, agreed by all without any monopoly, source

\textsuperscript{19} People who were born in French Algeria from French parents before coming back to France because of the war.
of benefits for all actors involved. The beginning of the improvements of the Franco-Algerian economic relations started in Alger in 2012 by the former president François Hollande is a great starting point towards an era of fair relations in Africa.
4.2. The French military policy in Africa

In order to understand the impact and the reasons for such a strong policy, we must analyze first and wonder why European states intervene so much in Africa. Actually, while talking about Europeans, there are two countries mainly who do intervene. These countries are of course the former empires, France and the United Kingdom, with respectively over 30 and 7 interventions since the late 1980s. Of course, these numbers are not including the international interventions where these countries have also participated, such as the UN blue helmets peacekeeping operations.

4.2.1. Postcolonialism and French military presence in Africa

Different theories of international relations are being used in order to analyze and understand this will of a former colonizer to intervene in its former colonies. For instance, the realists do think that all interventions are being avoided if there are no direct benefits, whether strategic or economic for the intervening country. In the other hand, the liberals and constructivists do believe that there is an intervention in order to protect a militia leader to perpetuate a crime against humanity for example, or basically, because of the common colonial past, the responsibility to protect the people from the former colony. Anyway. Most of the theories do agree on one aspect of it, it is the legitimization of the intervention. The legitimization of such armed events is a major challenge for the intervener. The major actors who must be convinced when looking for legitimization are of course the state targeted by the intervention and, most of the time the most important, the international community. Yet, the theory that fits the most with such behaviors from the interveners is the theory I have been using through this whole thesis: postcolonialism. Indeed, besides criticizing imperialism and its history, it focuses on the marginalization of the former colonies, considering any economic, military or diplomatic relations between former colonizer and colonized states as inseparable from its controversial colonial and post-decolonization past. According to the theory, the decision of intervening instead of another state or international institution in a former colony or in a French-speaking country can be considered as paternalist, neocolonialist, sort of “who
knows better than the former colonizer” behavior. In other words, the theory does legitimately focus on security, prestige and the heavy weight of neo-colonialism. Security motivation is highly relevant when choosing whether or not to intervene. The state will first wonder if there are convenient or inconvenient relations with the political leader of the targeted state. Then might come sometimes the decision to remove or support cooperative or uncooperative regimes, and this decision does not depend on the fact that the regime is authoritarian or not, at least for France (Gegout, 2018).

There have been interventions when, except for security, the interests of intervening were neither strategic nor economic. When François Hollande made the decision to intervene in Mali in 2012 for example, the main reason was counterterrorism. And this example leads us to the conclusion that there are more motives for Europeans states to justify an intervention. The two aspects can be linked together. The intervening state can be aiming for prestige among the international community, with for example promoting Humanitarian reasons. More recently in France, mostly since Hollande’s presidency, the French military interventions might be focusing less on economic purposes than it used to do, since the late 1980s. Recently, as the international institutions gained global power and relevancy, the support of institutions such as the UN became more relevant, at least for Europe as a whole entity. When it comes to individual member states, the support for the UN can still be less mandatory, even if it is more than it used to be (Gegout, 2018). Recently there was a new “excuse” for European leaders and mostly French ones to justify the strong military polices in former colonies, or anywhere else in Africa. It is the war against terrorism. This is a really nice move from the French presidents actually. It was sometimes justified but sometimes not. In France, we still felt the trauma of the French involvement in the Rwandan genocide. It compromised any further French military “intrusion”, but this was before the rise of terrorism. It is a word that provokes fear among the French people, besides “uniting” them. When it comes to sending French soldiers in Africa to prevent further terrorist attacks in France, the public opinion always supports it.
4.2.2. The different tools and institutions of the French military policy in Africa

In terms of military policy, when it comes to the French particular case, there is more than one aspect of it. It is present in Africa through different processes. The most relevant and famous ones are of course military interventions, but this strong military influence has some aspects that are not very well known by the public and that can explain why such a presence is controversial, more than one half a century after the decolonization. In Africa, France has military bases of course but is also leading training programs, organizing agreements such as defensive, cooperative ones as well as intelligence cooperation, and all of these, relying on its solid postcolonial relations. The fact that France holds bases and has close cooperation with the African state resulted on having the opportunity to use Africa as a strategic base. In addition to this, the military bases are hosting a pretty high number of soldiers. Since the 90s, it became really usual for France to maintain a significant number of troops in Africa. The high numbers started in 1993. Back then, 13,000 soldiers were deployed in Africa. It decreased to 9,000 in 1996. More recently, in 2013, French soldiers were 6,000 and then increased to 9,000 in 2017. Last year, in 2018, they were more than 9,600, including the soldiers deployed with the United Nations and the European Union, for a total number of soldiers deployed globally of more than 30,000 (Ministère des Armées, 2019). One motivation for France in keeping such a strong presence there, as a country’s police: the African states members of the franc zone. Keeping this is in a way a safety for this important monetary system. Here, we see proof of interdependence of the French influences in Africa, regrouping Economy, Military, Diplomatic and Cultural policies. In addition to be the “master” of the CFA franc zone, it has to be the defender, France would gain legitimacy among the member states if in addition to be an interesting economic zone, it would be safe. In terms of institutions and programs, some relevant ones were created, highlighting the new aims in the region. On the one hand, the Direction de la Coopération de Sécurité et de Défense (DCSC) holds the role of advisor when political leaders or army chiefs, does not matter how authoritarians they are, need information. This goes back to the idea that the French military in Africa whether supports of removes heads of states and leaders, depending on how cooperative they are. Furthermore, the DCSC has several main missions. On the one hand, it is ensuring the security in the Sahel. It is linked with another mission which is
the fight against terrorism. It also handles the fight against illegal trafficking in Africa (France Diplomatie, 2017). Another relevant program, following the French desire of training African forces there is the program: *Renforcement des capacités Africaines de Maintien de la Paix* (RECAMP). Its main missions are to support African partners, logistically, financially, in order for the concerned states to deal with their security issues by themselves. The RECAMP was launched in 1997. France is not the only state providing such programs. Indeed, The United States and the United Kingdom do have similar programs and cooperate with France for better efficiency with the main aim of favorizing African security. RECAMP is supported by the UN as well as the African Union. They have many tools which can be used to train African forces. For instance, they deliver seminars about a special topic, which can be the management of refugees for example (France Diplomatie, 1997).

There is a double utility of having military bases in Africa. In order to prove the relevancy of one such as the one in Burkina Faso, we can mention the recent intervention of the French president in Ouagadougou which I covered in the political part of my analysis. It is a must for the French leaders to strengthen the relations between Paris and the leader of a country which is strategically interesting for France. Through history, we have seen that strengthening relations with a leader never really depended on whether it was an autocracy or not, but whether it is good for protecting or creating French interests. The double utility of such a base is first of course to hold a military presence, capable of intervening directly under the French banner in an anti-terrorist context, which is always good for the public opinion back in France. But at the same time, it is a training zone, where the French soldiers will be training the African officers and soldiers. This way, France should be able to have the possibility to intervene in order to protect its interests without sending its own troops. Thanks to this, it would gain legitimacy among the international community, permitting to solve conflicts for example in the areas where the French companies are operating. To give some ideas about the importance of such training operations, the French state has trained over 15,000 African troops between 1997 and 2012. To give an example, it is more than the total number of active soldiers in Congo (12,000) or even Slovenia (13,200) (World Bank, 2016). The French military influence does not limit itself with military training and interventions. In the cases where there is a will to avoid intervention, the Hexagon can also provide intelligence or satellite images as it did when the UK and the USA decided to help Nigeria in order to fight terrorism in
May 2014. For instance, thanks to this support we guess a French desire for welcoming new actors in the fight against terrorism in Africa. As it recently always has been a bilateral matter, as France is the western state which intervened the most in Africa in the last decade, such supports do prove a wish of multilateralism coming from Paris (Gegout, 2018 pp. 146).

4.2.3. The contrast between interventionism in the CFA Franc zone and noninterventionism in Algeria

As my analysis highlighted, Paris has always had a strong military role in Africa, in any French-speaking country or countries of the CFA franc zone, and the actual data does not indicate a decline of French interventionism, especially with the rise of terrorism in the Hexagon in the last decade. But as it can be with economic policy, North Africa and especially Algeria is a totally different case. Post-colonialism helps us here again to understand such a situation. As mentioned earlier, many French people live in Algeria and vice-versa; Algerian is the first nationality of migrants in France. The relevant absence of interventions by any kind from France in Algeria basically lasted from the beginning of the 90s till 2002. There is just a small detail, in which France did support the Algerian regime when the Algerian civil war started in 1991; Paris supplied arms. This support is less relevant to me than a direct intervention because it can mostly be considered as an economic opportunity, as France is one of the most important arms suppliers in Africa. Actually, it is even the second supplier of arms in Africa, following Russia, according to a study made by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). The study also revealed that Algeria and Morocco are both the biggest arms importers in Africa, the two of them represented in 2016 56% of the total arms imports to the continent. Nothing surprising as Algeria made the decision to heavily equip its powerful military institution in the 2010s. These data allow us to consider understanding how normal and non-controversial a deal between a large arms importer and a large arms exporter was, even with a French noninterventionism policy (Jeune Afrique, 2016). This came with supporting the regime in Algeria which is authoritarian. It is clear that such passive behavior in terms of interferences is due to the common past, once again. Particularly, the main reason why the French leaders did the choice not to do anything there is the still painful memories of the Algerian war. More than a hundred
thousand people from both sides died during the conflict. In the meantime, keeping such passive relations and support to the regime is a great opportunity considering the economic interests in Algeria. The Algerian natural resources are huge and still not exploited correctly by Algeria. It is more than possible that France is strengthening its relations with Algeria in order one day to help to the extraction and commercialization of such resources. For instance, as a symbolic data, the Eiffel Tower has been built with Algerian marble and iron, which shows the quality of the Algerian resources (Kazitani, 2018).

4.2.4. The Rwandan impact: the fear of snowball effect of countries switching from French to English influence

There is another exception which must be discussed while analyzing the impact of the military (and political) policy of France in the countries under French influence. It is Rwanda. France remains the most criticized country concerning the involvement in the Rwandan genocide. This is the result of supporting regimes depending on political and economic interests instead of focusing on Human Rights or democracy. It was the country which had the closest links with the Rwandan regime. The international community is critical towards France not only because of its behavior before the genocide but also during and at the end of it. The support it had over the regime before the genocide, the absence of reaction during it and the really small deployment at the end of it during operation Turquoise in 1994 can be grouped as a total political and military failure which jeopardized the French influence in Africa in the 1990s. The international community, the scholars, the authors, all generalized the Rwandan case as a general failure of the French African policy. It is common to hear that the ways France was and is acting in Africa have made obvious that a disillusion like this would happen. Here, it is easy to link the failure directly with the Françafrique. France has once again favorized the cooperative leader and this time, it has supported, equipped an undemocratic and corrupted government. Before changing its mind, Paris has also sent troops in order to defend this corrupted government from rebellion. It was the external actors which helped the most the Hutus, the perpetrators of the genocide. Such a case is one of the reasons for the strategy change from France, at least the memory of such a catastrophe remains in the head of the French leaders. The military policy went through big changes following the
complicity in the genocide. It was so clear that this policy changed because of the implication even though it remained officially denied since, as it was like declaring itself guilty of such charges (Charbonneau, 2006). Although, the RECAMP program might have been a direct change following the genocide. As I explained, it was a step towards the multilateralization of the French military policy. France could have lost its legitimacy of “Gendarme de Afrique” and needed anything to whether get its former position back, whether simply relegitimize itself with the aim of anticipating any future controversial intervention. In other words, the new strategy had for main motive the elimination of past mistakes, abuses, blunders…

To resume with the impact of such a case on the French policy, we can analyze the current situation in the concerned country; Rwanda. France usually did everything to maintain at least a cultural influence in this central African state. Some scholars like Cumming and Chafer did argue that the will of keeping a French cultural presence is linked with the historical Franco-English rivalry. Indeed, Rwanda had progressively switched its teaching language from French to English in the years following the genocide. Rwanda did justify this change in order to increase its access to the global economy and to strengthen its relations with its English-speaking neighbors, such as Kenya, Uganda or Tanzania, which is a credible reason (The Guardian, 2009). Nevertheless, for the French side, it must have represented a possible threat in the sense that other states could have followed the movement, seeing the opportunity of increasing the access to the global economy which would have led to the weakening of the CFA franc zone. The measures which followed the genocide and such decisions from Rwanda clearly aimed at avoiding another case like this. The least we can say is that these measures were quite successful, as the French position today is back at a level sensibly equivalent as the prominent position it had before 1994 (Cumming & Chafer, 2011).

4.2.5. A conclusion on the French military presence in Africa today

The reasons why France keeps a continuing military presence and a quick intervention capacity are linked with being constrained by its neo-colonial past. In the last decade, it also started to pursue goals which are not neo-colonial, to some extent. Intervening for counter-terrorism in Mali for instance was not motivated by economic interests, even
though that would not have been possible without the close cooperation between France and Mali’s government. A new French official position in terms of military in Africa has shown up, which might be leading to the end of the era of “Former colonizer does it better”. This new position supports the idea that Africa have to deal with its own problems. This does not imply the end of the French military presence, but if there is intervention, the framework has to be multilateral and in compliance with international laws.

The French military is still there, and really active. But some things whether have begun to change or completely changed over time. On the one hand, the unilateral interventions became increasingly rare. France know cares about acting with the US or UN support, or any other multinational institution. France has also learned from its mistakes in Rwanda, both before and after the genocide. As the behavior following the Rwandan decision to switch its teaching language from French to English might have scared Paris from a snowball effect, such fears have disappeared, allowing closer cooperation between French-speaking and English-speaking countries. On the international plan, Paris managed to convince the European Union to acknowledge its African military policy. But still, both actors did not find a common agreement which would provide troops from the EU member states, forcing France to continue acting alone, at least in the countries of the CFA franc zone. In terms of Françafrique policies, there is one aspect which also began to change recently. The support towards African leaders who have economic or personal relations with Paris is no more systematical. However, there is no doubt about the persisting will of influencing the African internal politics. In the political discourse, we can also mention Eurocentrism, as well as in the policies from president Macron. Since then, and compared to his predecessors, the foreign policy is way less oriented towards Africa. This implies no major changes in the continuing French African policies but also no new “rush” to Africa. Yes, France has changed its tactic of intervention. In other words, it was updated. As before, and according to the French government itself, it was legitimate to claim exclusivity over the States which were part before of the “colonial family”, it is today mostly controversial. So, as French interventions in the 1990s were unilateral and not backed by the international community, the latest operations such as the Malian one was slightly different. All actors involved were informed by the French state, and the intervention happened following the request from the Malian government. Indeed, these manners are way different from the “Françafrique” manners. To this
improvement, we can add a whole new focus. Nowadays, the French focus is on stabilization, in addition to the intervention itself. And this makes a change, as it supports African states to deal with their problems by themselves in the future. There is apparently less and less French obsession about the fears of losing its economic market, as anyway new actors such as China took over the economic lead. Anyway, this fear was caused by the prominent position of the prestige in the French policy in Africa. Once it was changed by the arrival in the African market of the new actors, the multilateral opening of the African market did not much damage the prestige, this way, the focus will be able to be on cooperation, instead of a quest for monopoly.

About the future of the French policy interventions, there are two schools within Postcolonialism with different views on the recent internal events in France. Both schools are basing their thinking on the recent French elections. More particularly, they focus on the recent good results of the far-right French party Rassemblement National (RN), the former Front National (FN), as it has had really good results in the last 2 presidential elections in 2012 and 2017, as well as in the local elections in 2014 and the regional ones in 2015. According to one school, the current public opinion, the rise of extremism, the recent protest like the yellow vests might lead to having a great impact on both internal and external French policy. Such extremism might even lead to the recovery of the Françafrique of the 1990s because of the interest in the former French empire that we can find in the political discourse of RN leaders. In such a theory, the way and the motives for which France will be intervening in the future would recover their neocolonial characteristics. Notwithstanding the current situation concerning this rise of extremism, even everywhere in Europe, the other postcolonial school focuses on the positive impact that the presence of minorities in the EU member states might have on national foreign policies such as the French ones (Gegout, 2018 pp. 188-194).

In order to illustrate the “new” direction in which the French African policy is oriented, the former French minister of foreign affairs Michel Barnier said in 2004 “We stay true to our past but, we live in a new era, that is Africanization. The primary responsibilities belong to the African leaders. Responsibility also results from a fusion of both International and European efforts” (DILA, 2004).
5. The legitimacy and the future of the French presence in Africa

5.1. Interviews

In order to add relevancy and authenticity to my analysis, I have decided to interview two people who were born in Africa and who lived there long enough to explain their vision of the French presence in their respective country. As the legitimacy of such a presence is somehow based on personal opinion, I needed to lead at least two interviews in order to have objective results by comparing their answers. The first interviewee is Magali BIBANG, native from Gabon and who left for France for the purpose of studying. She graduated with a master’s degree in international business law from University of Rennes I, in France. Her opinion was valuable as she is really interested in the particular topic of the French presence in Gabon. The fact that she is now living in France is pertinent in the sense that she could see by living there the “backstage” of the French presence in Africa.

The second interviewee is Franklin Etongwe Mukete, native from Cameroon. He left for studying in Hungary only 5 years ago. He is now a second-year international relations master student at the Corvinus University of Budapest. As he spent most of his life in Cameroon, his knowledge about the French policy in Africa was a key element in my understanding of the day-to-day life under the French influence. My criteria for choosing the interviewees was first geographical: It needed to be two different French-speaking countries. The second was economic, As I needed countries from the Franc CFA zone, as it is an essential part of my thesis.
5.1.1. Ms. Magali BIBANG, Gabon

- **Did you feel/are you feeling the French presence in your country?**

*It is clear that France is present in my country, Gabon. For instance, from a political/strategical point of view: there is a French military base in Gabon. From an economic point of view: Many French investors are operating in Gabon, such as Bolloré, TOTAL and recently, the company PAUL (French bakery franchise) for the well-known companies (...) but there are smaller private investors that are somehow trying to invest in tourism (which is not well developed yet) and catering.*

*On a larger scale, the French-speaking Sub-Saharan African countries currency, the Franc CFA is another example and not the least, of the French influence in Africa. Its existence in itself angers many Pan-Africanists supporters of an Africa fully independent from the Franco-African relations.*

This confirms the way I interpreted the French presence in Sub-Saharan Africa. The most effective and noticeable policies are the military and economic ones. Therefore, African citizens do realize the problem that the CFA franc zone created. It also introduces an actor I didn’t mention before, the smaller private investors; the one investing in catering and tourism. It is in line with the continuing French economic hopes in Africa. This goes in the opposite direction of French economic withdrawal from these countries.
According to you, is the French presence in Gabon legitimate and moral?

I am not in a position for qualifying the French presence of immoral and illegitimate. However, it is fair to say that the position of France is highly questionable to that extent. Indeed, France has for a tradition to justify its presence/interventions in the African states which are former colonies by considering it as a help to a friend (friend states). Nonetheless, this friendly relation is one-sided in the sense that it is only in the direction of:

France → former colonies but never: former colonies → France.

For example, about the French base in Gabon, there is no Gabonese Military base in France.

But why?

Anyway. If we want to question the morality of such a presence, it would be better if France would ask itself if its presence on the African territory is really contributing to the development and the autonomy of the concerned states - as what E. Macron was deploring in one of his African trips – or if France would rather keep perpetuating its tutelage which has never really disappeared from the French agenda since decolonization.

Here, Magali is highlighting a recurrent problem that can be used for analyzing the situation in each Sub-Saharan countries; it is the way France is justifying its actions in the concerned state. Most of the time it has been seen that France considers its actions as if it was like helping a friend because of the common past or the proximity between the leader of this country and the French leader. Most of the time, it is enough for the international community to consider it legitimate, even today. But the situation is considered as such only by the French government, and perhaps the “leaders” of the concerned states. But for the African citizens, they don’t necessarily see these policies as mutual help, as Gabon would never intervene in France or interfere in its domestic politics. Then, she’s raising a question concerning the vision that France should have over its actions before executing it. The main thing that should be done in order to change the status quo according to Magali is for France to wonder if its presence in Gabon is whether really contributing to the development and the autonomy of the state, whether it is just
perpetuating its neocolonial behavior. This “self-questioning” might give an idea about the morality of the French actions.

- Does this presence look temporary, by giving signs of a French desire to help the country to become totally independent from the French influence, or whether is the current situation stuck into a paternalist and neocolonial situation?

I would say that the situation is stuck; but not into a neo-colonialism. Rather into a colonialism which never left: The systematic French intervention when difficult presidential elections occurred in the French-speaking countries; or even when the French military presence supporting the newly “democratically” elected – and contested by a part of the population – African president (like it was in Rwanda, Côte d’Ivoire, Gabon...). As I mentioned before, this type of situation never happened the other way around. For instance, the French government, which is suffering from a difficult political episode: the ongoing movement of the Yellow Vests in France, doesn’t leave room for intervention or help from the African “friend” states.

This is this tutelage which was mentioned before that we are discussing now:

FRANCE has a role to play about the political future of its former colonies. In other words, in order to remain a “friend state “of France, the president needs to promote French interests even if it has to jeopardize the interest of the concerned state.

The situation has always been the same... Even after the “independences” of the French-speaking African countries. And it looks like the things won’t change in the near future, considering the quality of the political leaders that Africa is providing today.

This answer is the confirmation of what many African scholars are criticizing, going in the opposite direction of what the French leaders are saying. For Magali, the colonizer has never left. This sentence is strong. She is emphasizing the role of France when it comes to political elections, in its own country for instance. It comes back to the double use of the military bases. As there is one in Gabon, troops can easily be deployed in order to support the “friendlier” political leader in order to avoid an opposition leader which would be bad for French interests. Once again, the equity between the two actors is
criticized. The “Yellow Vests” movement could leave room for “friend states” to help France as France is “helping” African countries, but it didn’t happen.

According to Magali, France has a role to play in African politics in order to protect its interests. Even if it’s compromising the interests of the country’s people.

She is concluding the answer with a pessimistic point of view concerning a possible change in regard to this topic, arguing that the African leaders yet do not have the capacity to change the status quo.

- **Do you consider this presence as legitimate, from a legal point of view?**

  *Laughs! The question is weighty in meaning. It is only legal what the law says! The main problem with the law in the French-speaking African countries is that these are usually adapted from original French texts. You know understand know why France doesn’t meet many difficulties to legitimize its actions even though these can be criticized on many counts.*

  Furthermore, *I suppose that -based on some info recently made public- that these relations are governed by some old conventions dating from the independences of the French-speaking African states. The kind of documents which are called “STATE SECRET” which are often justifying position statements which only the aggrieved citizens are denouncing. These are the conventions ratified by France and its former colonies that are setting “in theory” the “rules” governing to Franco-African relations.*

  *However, I support that this question provoked indignation because unfortunately, it is only legal what the law says, and the law was written by France. It is just applied to others!*

  About the legal question, Mrs. Bibang provided me information which is really hard to find somewhere else. The legal aspect of the Franco-African relations is not mentioned really often. She also gave the most probable reason; France might not find big difficulties to justify its actions on the legal aspect because the rules are French and were never changed since decolonization. In these conventions, which would be “STATE SECRET”,
according to the period when it has been written, it is possible that some clauses are allowing an easier intervention from the French state than any other actor in the world. It would explain the regularity of the presence of the military bases which have never been reconsidered as anything has changed for years. If it is the reality, such legal conditions could be easily and legitimately considered as a heavy neocolonialist legal policy.

- According to you, is there a better way France would be present in your country from a moral and legal way, which would promote mutual help and cooperation between the two countries and which would not have a paternalist and neocolonial dimension, or instead, do you think this should end, as this presence is from another age?

I will answer this question by asking another one:

-Is there a country which in France is having the same influence in its relations with France?

Or even:

-Why, according to you, the political party previously called “Front National” is calling for a French exit from the European Union?”

We are in 2019, no country today would like to be under the tutelage from another country!

In this answer from Mrs. Bibang to the final question, we can feel a strong incomprehension concerning the one-sided Franco-African relations. She is mentioning the French Euroscepticism as well, coming from the right-wing party “Rassemblement National” (formerly called Front National). Indeed, one of the motivations of the supporters of this party is to get rid of Brussels “control” over the country. Here, Mrs. Bibang is arguing that even within France, there is a feeling that being under the tutelage from another country or institution is no longer acceptable.
5.1.2. Mr. Franklin ETONGWE MUKETE, Cameroon

I had the chance to have another interview with another person who was born in a French-speaking African country. Mr. Franklin Etongwe Mukete was born in Cameroon and is a Master student in International Relations at the Corvinus University of Budapest in Hungary. Here are the key points of the discussion I had with him, followed by my analysis.

- Do you feel / did you feel the presence of France in Cameroon?

*I think I can say yes, in terms of economics politics and military. In terms of economic, they are (the French) one of the largest economic presence in terms of import/export, we have the French company called Bolloré, which is the main company in Cameroon in terms of agricultural products...*

*In terms of politics, Cameroon does pay allegiance to France. They (Cameroon) copy most of the French practices.*

*In terms of military, there is a French military base in Cameroon. It helped Cameroon when fighting against Boko Haram, during their insurgency.*

In this answer, we can highlight the typical three-level French influence. The big companies and investors for the economic, the allegiance to France and the “copied” French practices for the political influence, and as it was in Gabon, the military base for the military influence.

When I chose to have interviews in my thesis, I did not look for particular countries. It is really interesting that both countries are hosting a French military base. I did not expect that the French policy in Africa was so similar from one country to another. By hearing the answers of the people, I have interviewed, I noticed something like a French policy “package” as the answers to some of my questions were similar.
• In your opinion, is today the presence of France in Cameroon legitimate?

For economic legitimacy, I would say no. Because they use some sort of forced exploitation. They don’t really pay attention to what the people of Cameroon want. We have many strikes, because of the low salary.

In terms of military legitimacy, I can say yes. Without the French military in Cameroon, Cameroon would be a different country. There would be high insecurity.

In terms of political legitimacy, I can say no. Same as economics, no for both of them, but military: yes.

To this important question, the answer from Franklin was a bit different from Magali’s answer. Franklin is doing a big distinction between the different categories of influence, and Magali was putting all French policies in a “neocolonial bucket”. What is important to understand here is that according to Franklin’s point of view, people can see legitimacy in one particular policy while criticizing another one. The economic one is once again highly criticized because of the methods of the French companies (forced exploitation, monopoly…) and one the other hand, the French military seems legitimate as Franklin is considering it as important for the security in the country.

• And what about the moral aspect of this presence?

We can say it’s controversial, but it depends from which point of view you’re looking at it. If you look at it from a military point of view today, it can be moral. But if you do from an economic point of view, it will not be moral.

Following the logic of the precedent answer, there is a difference between the policies. As the military is important for the citizen’s security, it can be perceived as moral to have a military base within the Cameroonian border. On the other hand, controlling the economy, having a monopoly, having such political practices can be perceived as immoral.
• In your opinion, does the French presence looks temporary, or does it look like getting stuck into a permanent position?

Well, for me, I can say it’s a permanent situation, because it’s been happening for years without any changes, and nobody acted, talked about any change, no one really asked “why is it like this, why things have been operated by the French... For me, I think it’s permanent. So, the changes which are being promised by the French presidents, to put an end to the Françafrique, is not happening.

This answer is similar to Magali’s answer. According to them, the current settings are not supporting a possible change in the next years. I have mentioned before the fact that “putting an end to Françafrique” was often used by the candidates to the presidential elections for campaign purposes. So far, in the eyes of the African citizens, it looks like these promises were not fulfilled, as no changes occurred since the decolonization and there are no policy differences from a French president to another.

• Based on your personal knowledge, do you think that French presence is legal?

No, I don’t think it’s legal. Because in most of the former French colonies in Africa, I can say that 98% of all the activities that France has been carrying out in these states are not legal. Because in terms of economics, can you imagine that these French companies are paying like so small taxes, less than what are paying the home-based companies... these actions are not legal.

And they will never be sanctioned for these actions because most of the laws about it have been written by France at the time of the independences. Since then, nothing has changed. I will give you an example of why this can’t be changed. We have a president in Cameroon: Paul Biya, he works really closely from the French government and he is here from 1982.

As we have seen with the previous interview, the legal aspect of such a presence is controversial because of the origin of the governing documents. From that perspective, every French operation which is legitimised thanks to these documents might not be legitimate according to modern international laws. The case of the low taxes for the French companies might have been made possible by the “state secret” documents which
Magali mentioned in the previous interview. As in the case of Cameroon, the president is in power since 1982, there are possibilities that such “state secret” agreements have been made between France and the Cameroonian president at the beginning of his presidency. These long-lasting agreements which apparently didn’t change since their creation could last as long as Paul Biya is in power.

- **Do you think there would be, based on the actual structures, institutions, position, the influence that France has in Cameroon today, a possibility to use those bases in order to help the country to become more independent or, this system is too neocolonial and should disappear for the good of the Cameroonian?**

  *In order to answer this question, I have to say first that France is present in Cameroon for their self-interest. So, the reason why such institutions are there is for the good of the French state. And today, this is really hard to believe that France could leave Cameroon; Paris has agreements with the Cameroonian government. It means that these agreements are beneficial for both governments. Indeed, the Cameroonian government is benefiting from the French presence which is making really unlikely the possibility of a French departure. Actually, because of these institutions, it will be very difficult to change things in Cameroon.*

  This answer matches with realism. The presence of France in African countries would not be aiming at developing or helping the concerned country but would rather be a matter of self-interest. Here again, we can feel a high pessimism concerning the possible departure of France.

- **Weren’t there any differences of policies between the different presidents of France?**

  *Jacques Chirac, François Hollande, Nicolas Sarkozy, Emmanuel Macron, nothing has changed. In all the French-speaking African countries France is getting advantages from these countries, for example, nice contracts for the companies such as Bolloré. They give them really low taxes... Not many presidents would change their African policy if they are getting such advantages. The only president which could have changed something in*
Cameroon was Nicolas Sarkozy, as he almost made the Cameroonian president to leave because he didn’t have good relations with him. The common belief in Cameroon is that if Nicolas Sarkozy would have been elected again instead of François Hollande or Emmanuel Macron, Cameroon would have today another president.

As a conclusion to this interview part, I will focus on the similarities and differences between the two interviews. On the one hand, both of them strongly felt the French presence in their respective countries. The presence of big French companies such as Bolloré is highlighted, and on a larger scale, the French control over the French-speaking African countries markets. The presence of smaller French investors has been a key element, as it was not emphasized by Franklin. In terms of military presence, there is also a difference even though both countries are hosting a French military base. The difference is mostly based on legitimacy; Franklin did consider the French army’s presence as legitimate as it was not the case with Magali. The economic and political legitimacy has been questioned by the two interviewees, and one even put the accent on the fact that these relations are one-sided.

Both Franklin and Magali agreed on the normalization of such a presence, in the sense that there are a few chances that something will change in the next years and that there are a few chances that France would leave their country. France is stuck in this neocolonial situation. The legal aspect is being criticized by both interviewees. They agree on the fact that the laws were written by France which is making any “legitimized” action controversial, in the sense that it is not difficult to legitimize it for Paris even though it is not moral. And finally, the moral aspect. From the point of view the people I’ve interviewed, such unilateral relations are not moral, as Africa doesn’t have room to have the same type of influence in France.

In other words, for the good of the citizens of the concerned states, there is still a lot of work to do to make the French presence moral and legitimate. The current system is the same than the one created after the independences. It is beneficial for France today but is not a kind of policy which can be held in 2019. Despite the political campaign promises of the French presidents, there is no sign of imminent change. France has a role to play
for the development of the African countries but the way it is handling its influence remains stuck into the same paternalist and neocolonial position than after decolonization.

5.2. The future of the French presence in Africa

There are many questions which can be asked about the future of France in Africa. On the one hand, the most obvious is to wonder if France should step by step withdraw itself from Africa, or at least try to normalize its relations with a region which has known and is knowing many crises, or if France should rather assert its position because of the new strategic issues which emerged recently such as the access to natural resources and the need for competitiveness because of the arrival of the new actors in Africa. This position strengthening might also permit a “better” answer to terrorism which would be good for the public opinion, as well as having the opportunity to help to develop the environmental policies of the African countries if France would take such decisions, as it is a hot topic today. It will also depend on the theory that it used to interpret such a topic, when for the realists, France will maintain its position by keeping its advantageous military bases, its official and unofficial diplomatic relations and the lasting alliances with some of the African states even though they are not open to political reforms and democratic transitions. We rather hope that France would develop the transparency over its actions, better use of the aid for development and finally, a possible diversification of its partners which would represent better the economically globalized world we have today. I will also mention the possibility of honesty from the French government if by any chance it would use its advantageous diplomatic position to put pressure on governments in favor of political reforms and hereby assume its “duty of interference” (Hugon, 2007).

Another wonder which is at stake for France is the future of the CFA franc zone. In my opinion, it is already surprising that it is still the same as it was when it was created. Most of the critics over the French African policy concern the military operations, but the main critics should be about this system which still represents the French economic control over Sub-Saharan Africa. Actually, most of the people even in France do not know what implies such an economic system. France is not as explicit as it should be concerning the details of it. Military intervention is easier to understand, as the motives even if unofficial are easily identifiable. This zone should be the first target if France really hopes to get rid
of the Françafrique. This system is rightly being seen by many as the remains of the colonial past which provokes a lack of national sovereignty within the member states, even though its supporters are arguing that it creates an economic stability, I would add that it creates a gap between the real value of the currencies and the reality because of the fixed parity with the Euro. But the possible solution is not far from the actual situation. From the already existing change system can be created a more flexible one, for example by attaching all the CFA currencies to a currency basket and still keep the unlimited convertibility guaranteed by the French treasury (Hugon, 2007). The major challenge will be to know how the CFA system can change throughout time. And what France should be worrying about is the settings of a possible transition; In my opinion, the main problem with the Franc CFA is the fact that the Franc is overrated compared with the reality of the Sub-Saharan countries economy. When the day comes that Africa will get rid of the CFA and have its own currency, the difference between the value of the former CFA and the new currency will be really high (Devarajan & Hinkle, 1994).

The future of the French military presence is a different matter. The French army has known in the last decade a relegitimization in the eyes of many Africans. For instance, the fight against Boko Haram\(^{20}\) to consider the French military presence as vital for the country. The future of the French military policy in Africa will also depend on the behavior of the other actors in Africa. In the case of Sub-Saharan Africa, France is most of the time acting unilaterally because no other institutions or actors want to get involved militarily. And other actors are most of the time not intervening in the countries under French influence because there are already French military bases there, except for some, for instance, Cameroon, where there is also an American military base (Bore, 2006). Furthermore, as the US has no mandate for war-fighting in French-speaking Africa, the new multilateral settings have created some kind of division of labor in countries like Mali. The French forces were taking care of the fighting part while the UN forces ensured their role of peacekeeping. When the time will come for the French military to definitely leave the African continent, it will be needed first to grant the possibility for other actors to intervene instead of France (Bere, 2017).

\[^{20}\text{Jihadist terrorist group based in northeastern Nigeria, which is also active in Chad, Niger and Cameroon.}\]
The future French decision-makers will have to develop a specific set of policies which reflect the high number of emerging powers in Africa. The region has the possibility to develop itself but is still needing massive foreign direct investment, new infrastructures, and efficient institutions… These emerging powers are expected to play a major role in this development. Recently, the Western states such as France are beginning not to have the will or the capacity to support African development. So, the role that the emerging powers have is even more significant. It is also expected that an Africa economy propelled by the emerging states would be a good opportunity for French interests. When China became one of the top economic partners of Africa, France has been afraid of the fact that China will become the number one, in areas such as oil, where TOTAL almost have a monopoly in some countries. But it didn’t consider the possibility that if emerging states such as the BRICS\(^{21}\) countries would propel the African growth, it would be beneficial for France as France is present in sectors such as shipping, port operations, telecoms, air transport and railways and such an economic growth would generate more businesses for the services that France is providing.

\(^{21}\) BRICS is an acronym which refers to a special group of emerging states: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
6. Conclusion

The decolonization in both North and Sub-Saharan has settled the type of relations the region will have with France in the future. The non-violent process in Sub-Saharan Africa allowed France to expand their influence and to sustain it since today. On the other hand, in North Africa, the Algerian war and the general violence which is associated with the process has prevented France to expand its influence apart from the cultural one.

These Franco-African relations, which go by the name of Françafrique, are being carried from a president to another and represent an important branch of policy for the French decision-makers. From the Charles de Gaulle with the “African cell” in the Élysée Palace to Hollande and its focus on security, the French presidents have all addressed the issue of Africa from a different perspective. It was openly neocolonial in the past century, until the year 1994, when the traditional Françafrique has come to an end, following the Rwandan genocide, the devaluation of the Franc CFA and the death Félix Houphouët-Boigny. After 1994, we have been able to see a change in the discourse of the French presidents and presidential candidates. Most of them have promised to put an end to these controversial relations.

In reality, no president has fulfilled its promise of rupture. Nicolas Sarkozy, for instance, has shown its interest for such relations even before becoming president, with its accusation of having been financed by Muammar Gaddafi for its presidential campaign. The following president François Hollande, being from the left political represented hope for the future of the relations, but the situation in Africa which it has inherited forced him to intervene quickly following the request from the Malian president. What followed is an African security policy with many interventions of the French military, some of which are still ongoing today. With Hollande, the main thing which has stopped in comparison with its predecessors is the “evening visitors” which was still very active during Sarkozy’s mandate. But Hollande’s focus on French internal policy did not leave him room to drastically change the Françafrique. With France’s current president Emmanuel

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22 The evening visitors is a term used by French medias used to qualify the unofficial meetings between the French and African decision-makers in order to discuss Franco-African matters.
Macron, there were no major hopes in regard to a possible end of Françafrique. Like its predecessors, of course, the promise of putting an end to it was present in its political discourse but so far, only a few changes have occurred. Emmanuel Macron has really good communication skills and knows how to use it wisely, even abroad. His intervention in the University of Ouagadougou provides us a perfect example. The content of the speech and the answers were clearly in favor of writing a new chapter of Franco-African relations, but in the attitude and the tone, we still felt this neocolonial and paternalist feeling, which is discouraging concerning the future of the Françafrique. Still, let us mention Macron’s promises to give African artworks held in Paris back to their original country, following their claim. Also relevant, the behavior of Macron is relevant concerning the colonial mistakes of France, such as recognizing the French barbarism in Algeria, or his meeting and apologies with the widow of Maurice Audin, the Algerian independentist who disappeared in 1957.

After the decolonization during the cold war, Paris felt the growing American and Soviet influence. It is the reason why Africa granted France space for having a real influence in the region: this was the origin of the controversial situation we have today. Back then, African was essential for the French economy. The situation started to change after the fall of the Berlin wall, as Paris understood the growing economic importance of Europe. It was a first and small step towards a possible normalization of the Franco-African relations. After 1994, an economic tactical change has occurred. The arrival of the new actors such as China have led the French companies to have less and less interest in Africa because, for some, the situation of monopoly they had was gone, and there was no hope to take it back. The strategy also changed because of Europe. Indeed, France is exporting more towards Europe than towards Africa today. Globally, the Franco-African economic relations remain relevant but are nothing compared to the period after decolonization.

This data could lead to think that France has economically left Africa, but it did not. The oil companies are deeply settled there, and even without their monopoly, they won’t leave Africa. The French companies, in general, have a bigger knowledge about African geography, which is ensuring them a good African future, whatever the economic circumstances. Even though the investments in Africa are nothing compared to the last century, France is still one of the main investors in order to ensure its economic presence and having a backup plan in case if Africa becomes the new global economic destination.
Since the independences, France has been able to keep its main economic asset in Africa: The Franc CFA. As long as France will be the decision-maker of this institution, it will be able to keep control over the Sub-Saharan African economy. But, if the end of Françafrique really happens, it will be the first institution to disappear. It has a strong neocolonial meaning and did not change at all since its creation. If we could distinguish several levels of French involvement in Africa, the Official Development Assistance could become the future of the French presence in Africa, if the Françafrique went to disappear. Helping without interfering would be a perfect transition for the Franco-African relations. The new multilateral dimension of the African economy, the diversification of its partners, also contributed to some kind of normalization of the Franco-African relations. However, there is a strong doubt about the fact that the former empires such as France would let their economic privileges go so easily. Even with the arrival of the new actors, France is keeping its presence, its companies, its political interferences which are often creating good economic opportunities, in other words, France is still holding an economic tutelage over Africa, something which can be interpreted as a security for the future, despite its neocolonial aspect. Nevertheless, this situation might have led French interests in North Africa to grow. The policy of apologizes and the consolidation of the relations between Paris and Algiers since Hollande’s mandate fits with the logic of an African backup plan. Further to this, Algeria has a lot of unexploited natural resources, and has a strong cultural connection with France, and thus, represents a great opportunity for the French economic future in Africa.

The French military in Africa is the most visible policy. Indeed, an intervention is more striking than an economic agreement secretly ratified which was written after the independences. But the one policy having the biggest impact on Africa is rarely the military one. However, it is interesting to dissociate the economic policy from the military one. The number of French interventions since the end of the 1980s is high, but we have seen that the reasons why France is intervening have changed since with for instance the war on terrorism. There are many French soldiers, bases and institutions in Africa, which allows France to intervene quickly if one leader is asking for it. In a possible end of Françafrique, such bases and institutions could also have a role, in the sense that training the future African military officers might be leading to a more independent Africa. In terms of legitimacy, recently France has gained credibility both in the international and regional level. Such “successful” interventions like Mali which wasn’t motivated by
economic interests are mostly supported by the African citizens and leaders. And since this new wave of interventions started, a French will of multilateralism was born, in the sense that France does not want to intervene alone anymore. But on the other hand, other actors such as the United States of America or the UN, whether does not want to intervene in the French-speaking countries, whether cannot intervene because of the lack of mandate for war-fighting. This situation, as discussed before, is leading to a division of labor between the actors involved, where France is fighting while the UN, for example, is ensuring its role of peacekeeping. In the future, and in order for the French to complete their withdrawal, the international and Franco-African agreements will have to change in order for the other actors to be able to intervene, which would support the normalization of the Franco-African relations. It means that even though the French military presence can be perceived today as legitimate, it does not mean that France has the duty to protect its former colonies. Although, a possibility of French intervention should be available when an African leader is requesting it, as the French military has now acquired much experience while intervening on the African ground.

Thanks to the interviews I have conducted, I have acquired the knowledge I could not have got from the articles and the books I have been reading while writing my thesis. Besides confirming my beliefs, it has strengthened my deep conviction about the fact that the French presence in Africa today is neither legitimate nor moral. I have learned the arrival of small investors in Gabon, a sign that in some way it is an interesting country to invest in, probably thanks to the safe markets created by the French presence, agreements and monopolies. The presence is also seen as unilateral, as the Africans would like to have an influence over France as well, which would be logic in their opinion. For Africans, this unilateral relation is a modern tutelage. Further to this, all signs are pointing towards a continuous presence. According to both of my interviewees, there is no sign of a temporary French presence.

Most importantly, I have been wondering and searching for any legal illegitimacy of this neocolonial situation. The only answers I could find about it were the answers of my interviewees to my question about legality. The reason why it is so hard to find any legal data about the Françafrique might be that such documents were indeed written and ratified in a secret way and this, just after the independences, which would never have changed since. It was really interesting that both of them had a different opinion about the French
military legitimacy. Franklin said that it was essential for the security in Cameroon while Magali included it in the “neocolonial package”.

The future of Sub-Saharan Africa depends on the future decisions of the French decision-makers. This dependency has been created after the decolonization and has been strengthened since because of the longevity of such a presence. The time has come for France to use its assets in order to support the African independentism as well as normalizing the relations which would be beneficial for both, as well as increasing the Sub-Saharan state’s importance on the global level.

Limitations

However, there are few points I wish I would have been able to develop more. My starting idea was to present the French influence as an entity which includes every kind of influence, including the cultural one. To my surprise, the whole French presence was impossible to cover in just one thesis. The cultural influence would have required a thesis in itself. I also wanted to have more details and a bigger part about the French presence in North Africa, but as I mentioned in my thesis, the influence compared to the one in Sub-Saharan Africa is so different that it also would have required a thesis by itself.
Personal opinion

- Regarding the literature I have discovered by writing this thesis, I was happy to have common beliefs with French writers such as Yves Gounin or Philippe Hugon, who represent for me the principal critical voices over the Franco-African relations. Such work has strengthened my critical spirit and is encouraging me into studying more about the Franco-African relations. I was also proud that French natives were able to perceive the French presence in Africa as the African natives do.

- The decision to write about this subject was legitimate to me. I do not agree that such behavior can come from a country such as France which is supposed to be a leader in terms of Human rights and liberty. I was proud to be able to hear the voices of the African people as well as perceiving their true will of independence. I also wished that the discourse of the French politicians was not full of lies: if they were fulfilling their promises, Françafrique would have been gone for a long time now. As Emmanuel Macron said in Ouagadougou in 2017, France is no longer a colonial empire. In terms of personal development, it surely supported my will of representing my country from a moral and respectful position.

- The goal of my research was to give the possibility for the reader to understand the complexity and the importance of the French influence in Africa, as an entity which does not limit itself only to big companies or military interventions. It was also important to me to add this part about legitimacy in order for the reader to see the subject from a different perspective, from the African people side.

- From my work would be needed future research which would be focusing on the possible solutions for a Sub-Saharan African independent from France, focusing on the future of the region, the interests of such normalization of the relations and its outcomes.
The future of Sub-Saharan Africa depends on the future decisions of the French decision-makers as well as the departure of African leaders who are the vestige of a very old system. This dependency has been created after the decolonization and has been strengthened since because of the longevity of such a presence. The time has come for France to use its assets in order to support the African independentism as well as normalizing the relations which would be beneficial for both, as well as increasing the Sub-Saharan state’s importance on the global level.
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Appendix

Questions and answers with Magali BIBANG, French citizen born in Gabon. April 8\textsuperscript{th}, 2019.

Original version : (French)

1-ressentez/ressentiez-vous la présence française dans votre pays ?

-si oui dans quel sens ?

Il est clair que la France est présente dans mon pays, le Gabon.

Par exemple, d'un point de vue politique/stratégique : une base militaire française est présente au Gabon.

D'un point de vue économique : de nombreux investisseurs français sont présents au Gabon tels Bolloré, TOTAL et depuis peu la maison PAUL pour citer les plus connus(...)mais aussi des investisseurs privés moins connus qui essaient tant bien que mal d'investir dans le domaine du tourisme (encore peu exploité) et de la restauration.

Sous une toute autre mesure, la monnaie des pays d'Afrique subsaharienne francophone, le \textit{Franc CFA} est un autre exemple de l'influence française en Afrique, et non des moindres puisque sa subsistance suscite la colère de plusieurs panafricanistes partisans d'une Afrique pleinement indépendante de la relation franco-africaine.

2-Selon vous, la présence française dans votre pays est-elle légitime et morale ?

-pourquoi ?
Qualifier la présence française d’"illégitime" ou "immorale" - pour répondre autrement à la question - ne relève pas de mon pouvoir. Toutefois il est vrai que la position de la France est très critiquable en ce sens.

En effet, la France a pour tradition de justifier sa présence/son intervention dans les États d'Afrique qui étaient anciennement ses colonies par une "amitié" qui existerait aujourd'hui entre elle et ses anciennes colonies ("pays amis"). Pourtant force est de constater que cette relation amicale ne se perçoit aussi ostensiblement que dans la relation France vers les ex-colonies que dans l'autre sens.

Ainsi, pour repartir de l'exemple de la base militaire, il n'en existe pas de similaire en France pour le Gabon.

Au nom de quoi la France devrait-elle former ses militaires sur le sol gabonais ?

Cela soulève des questions (…) 

Enfin, si l'on veut aborder la question sous l'angle de la moralité, ce serait plutôt à la France de se demander si sa présence sur le territoire de la plupart de ses ex colonies favorise réellement leur développement et contribue à leur autonomie - à l'instar de ce que semblait déplorer le président E. Macron lors de l'un de ses déplacements sur le continent africain - ou si au contraire, elle contribue à perpétuer cette sorte de "tutelle" jamais réellement disparue depuis l'indépendance des États concernés.

3- cette présence se présente comme quelque chose de temporaire, avec des signes montrant le désir de laisser le pays se débrouiller ou au contraire, s'enracine dans une position proéminente et néocolonialiste ?

Pour rester dans la logique de la question, je dirais plutôt qu'elle s'enracine, mettant en exergue non pas un néo-colonialisme mais une colonisation qui n'a jamais vraiment disparu : en témoigne l'intervention quasi systématique de la France en cas d'élections présidentielles périlleuses dans les pays africains francophones ; on pourrait même aller plus loin en évoquant la présence militaire française souvent en soutien au président
"élu démocratiquement" mais contesté par une partie considérable de la population (c'était le cas en Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Rwanda, etc...).

Au risque de se répéter, ce genre de schéma n'a jamais lieu en France et alors même que les élections en France n'ont pas la même connotation, vous me direz, des épisodes politiques fragiles comme en ce moment avec le mouvement des GILETS JAUNES ne donne pas pour autant une plateforme d'intervention pour les nations africaines "amies" de la France.

C'est justement cette "tutelle" évoquée précédemment dont il est précisément question ici : La FRANCE a son mot à dire sur le devenir politique de ses anciennes colonies. En un mot, pour rester des nations "amies", "il faut que le président en poste arrange les intérêts français" quitte à préjudicier ceux des États en cause !

La situation n'a jamais été autre...même avec l'entrée en "indépendance" des États africains francophones.

Et cela ne semble pas près de changer avec la qualité des leaders politiques que l'Afrique a à offrir en ce moment (…) !

4-pensez-vous que cette présence est légitime, d’un point de vue strictement légal ?

Rires ! La question est lourde de sens : il n'est de légal que ce dit la loi !

Le problème des textes de lois des pays africains francophones c'est qu'ils sont généralement adaptés des textes originaux français. Vous comprenez donc que la France n'aura pas de grande difficulté à légitimer ses actions quand bien même celles-ci seraient critiquables !

En outre, je suppose - sur la base des quelques informations aujourd'hui portées à la connaissance du public - que ces relations sont régies par des vieilles conventions datant de l'indépendance des États francophones africains ; ce genre de documents classés "SECRETS d'ÉTAT" qui justifient souvent des prises de positions que seuls les citoyens lésés dénoncent. Ce sont ces conventions signées par la France et ses anciennes colonies qui fixent l'étendue -en tout cas, en théorie - de leurs relations.
Toutefois, je continue de soutenir que la question suscite l'indignation car malheureusement est légal ce que permet la loi et la loi - du moins prise au sens de l'écrit - est éditée par la France. Elle ne fait que s'appliquer aux autres... !

5-

Y aurait-il selon-vous une meilleure façon pour la France d’être présent dans votre pays d’une manière morale, légale et qui encouragerait l’entraide et la coopération entre les deux pays, sans prendre une dimension paternaliste et néocolonialiste, ou cette présence doit plutôt prendre fin, étant d’un autre temps ?

Pour répondre à la question je vais utiliser une autre tournure : Y-a-t-il en France un pays qui entretienne la même influence dans ses rapports avec la France ?!

Ou encore, pourquoi selon vous, le parti français anciennement dénommé "FRONT NATIONAL" prône-t-il une sortie de l'Union Européenne ?!

Nous sommes en 2019 : aucun pays aujourd'hui n'aimerait demeurer sous la tutelle d'un autre !