

‘LA FRANÇAFRIQUE’: THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FRANCE AND ITS FORMER COLONIES IN AFRICA

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INSAMER
İHH İNSANİ VE SOSYAL ARAŞTIRMALAR MERKEZİ
IHH HUMANITARIAN AND SOCIAL RESEARCH CENTER
مركز البحوث الإنسانية و الاجتماعية

To cite this article: Korkmaz, Tuğba. “‘La Françafrique’:The Special Relationship Between France and Its Former Colonies in Africa”, INSAMER, 01.08.2019.  Analysis

Former colonial power France was the second largest empire in the world after Britain and the biggest in Africa during the 19th and 20th centuries. Even after the colonial times came to an end and most of the colonies gained their independence, the vestiges of colonialism remains and France maintains special relations with its former colonies. The first Ivorian President Félix Houphouët-Boigny introduced the expression ‘La Françafrique’ in 1955 to define the wish of some members of the African elite to maintain special relations with France after their independence. Since then, this term has been used several times in a pejorative meaning to describe French neo-colonial dominance in Africa.

‘The time of what we used to call ‘La Françafrique’ is over’ former French President François Hollande said solemnly before the Senegalese National Assembly on 12th October 2012. However, France still remains at the core of Africa through its military, cultural, economic

and geopolitical presence. The country seems to pursue a strategy of domination on behalf of its own interest to keep the dependence of African States. So is Hollande’s statement in Dakar entirely true? Is the time of ‘La Françafrique’ really over?

French Colonization of Africa (1830 - 1962)

French colonization of Africa started in 1830 with the invasion of Algeria. Gradually, new territories in Northern, Western and Central Africa as well as the East African coastal enclave of Djibouti were conquered, making France became the largest colonial empire in the continent. By 1914, French empire controlled 60 million people that spread out over 10,000,000 square kilometers.

Political motives for colonization differed from the search for markets, investments, raw materials and cheap workforce to the drive for victory and strategic advantage. There were



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also religious and cultural motives such as the desire to spread Catholicism, French culture and ‘educate’ indigenous people.

France governed its territories in two different ways. Protectorates preserved a relative autonomy and were ruled indirectly through existing local authorities. This was the case in Morocco and Tunisia. Colonies in West and Equatorial Africa were directly administered while Algeria enjoyed a status of French department.

Colonial Ideology: Racism and Propaganda

‘Colonisation is a first-order political necessity. A nation that doesn’t colonize is irrevocably destined for socialism and war between rich and poor’¹ said French philosopher Ernest Renan.

‘Superior races have a right towards inferior races... because there is a duty for them... They have the duty to civilize inferior races’. This is what Jules Ferry, the proponent of secular, compulsory and free school affirmed in the Chamber of Deputies²

The abolitionist Alexis de Tocqueville and Victor Schoelcher also supported colonialism. ‘There is neither need nor duty to allow our Muslim subjects to have exaggerate ideas on their own importance or to show that we have to treat them as if they were our fellow or our equal citizens. They know that we have a leading position in Africa’ wrote Tocqueville in his report on Algeria in 1847.³

By a reversal, colonization was also conducted on behalf of what the Europeans deem as ‘Human Rights’. It was to put an end to slavery in Africa and to bring progress and civilization to a ‘barbarian society’. Slavery and trafficking were then replaced by the territorial colonization of Africa based on inequality and racism. Black people and Muslims in Arabic countries were seen as ‘a retarded and imperfect civilization’ (Tocqueville, 1847).

Colonial ideology was supported by ‘racial hierarchy’ theory and ‘scientific racism’. In his

book ‘On the Origins of Species’, published in 1859, British scientist Charles Darwin first set out his theory of the evolutionary mechanism as an explanation of organic change. Darwin explained evolution through three principles namely variation, conservative force and struggle for existence.⁴ His theory was then applied to human society and so Social Darwinism emerged. It became very popular among Europeans to justify colonialism, racism and social inequality. Social Darwinism is based on the ‘survival of the fittest’, the idea that the strongest nation (in this case the Europeans) was the best able to rule. ‘White civilized’ nations had the moral and inherent right to conquer and civilize the ‘savage blacks’ described as being of low intellect.

These racist ideas were supported by the press and advertisements, which portrayed Africans as wild and uncivilized. For instance, in an advertising poster published in 1915, Banania (brand of cocoa powder) demeaned black people by representing a Senegalese Tirailleur eating cocoa powder at war and being atrocious in French (‘Y’a bon’). Propaganda and racist ideology allowed the legitimization of colonization.

African Resistance and Colonial Crimes

Since the very beginning, the colonization of Africa provoked resistance. Despite the disproportion of forces (most of the Africans used arrows and assegais while French soldiers used rifles and artillery), some countries fought, some assumed noncompliance and others unwillingly complied. Colonization was done with the cruelest methods (forced labour, deportation, starvation...) and some conflicts were very bloody and full of atrocities. A few examples defining African resistance to European imperial expansion and colonial rule in Africa are cited below.

In Algeria, a resistance movement against the bloody conquest led by Emir Abdelkader began in 1832 and lasted until he was captured by France and exiled in 1847. In March 1843,

lieutenant colonel Lucien de Montagnac's letter to his fellow embodies the violence of the war, 'All the good soldiers that I am honoured to command are warned by myself that if they bring me an Arab who is not dead, they will receive sabre blows'.⁵ Many Algerians lost their lives because of massacres, burned cities and villages, drought and deadly cholera outbreak. According to Dominique Maison (a research fellow in the National Institute of Population Studies) on the eve of the conquest, the population of Algeria was reportedly 3 million. However, Muslim population counted by French authorities was below this figure until 1881.⁶

In West Africa, around what Mali, Sierra Leone, and the Ivory Coast are now located, was the Mandinka Empire. Its ruler Samory Toure refused to submit to French colonization and combated the French both militarily and diplomatically. The Mandinka Empire resisted for many years, but Touré was captured in 1898, which ended the resistance.

In the Kingdom of Dahomey (today's Benin), the powerful king Behanzin resisted by attacking the French militarily and economically after their occupation of Porto Novo and Cotonou. However Dahomey ended up being first a protectorate and then a colony. Behanzin was exiled to the West Indies in 1894.

The Voulet and Chanoine military expedition, which is a military mission that bears the name of its two officers Voulet and Chanoine aimed to reach the Lake of Tchad. The mission that started on January 1899 and lasted for seven months embodies one of the greatest colonial violence lead by two out-of-control officers. The latter ordered their soldiers to massacre all the people who refuse to cooperate without any exception. Rape, dismemberment, decapitation, hanging, enslavement, fire and murder were just some of the numerous atrocities done to those who resisted. The exact death toll, estimated to be several thousand people, remains unknown.

Colonial Policy and Status of Colonial People

Colonial order was based on the institutionalization of inequality between indigenous and Europeans who didn't have the same rights. For instance, indigenous people were subjected to special laws and a special education that diminished their status in society. Some African men were also recruited to become a 'Senegalese Tirailleurs' and serve in the French army.

The Natives Law, called 'Le Code de l'indigénat' in French, was adopted in June 1881 and applied in all French colonies in 1887. In general terms, the law subjected natives and immigrant workers to forced labor, deprived them from their fundamental rights and made them subject to a tax on their reserves and to many others degrading measures. These measures intended to make sure that 'good colonial order', was always in effect.

'L'indigénat' distinguished two categories of citizens: French citizens (from the mainland) and French subjects (indigenous people). French subjects and immigrant workers were deprived of the greater part of their freedom and political rights. On the civilian level, they retained only their personal status.⁷

As Algeria was a French department, Algerian people could have citizenship (by naturalization) only if they renounced their civil status of Muslim. It was only after 1919 that naturalization was possible for Muslims but several conditions had to be met such as being over 25, being veteran, owner of a company or officer. This system of social and juridical inequality was abolished in 1946.

Besides implementing 'L'indigénat', the French also educated the young African generation to tailor their concerns. **The school system in colonies** had two main goals; One of them are to inflict the European way of thinking and spread French civilization and language. Another

one are to train local labour force for colonial interests.

In Algeria, from 1892 to 1948, education system was composed of two sub-systems: the first system was similar to the French one, where it gathered all the Europeans and some rich Algerians' sons. The second one was mainly composed by primary education called 'special education for indigenous' and had a civilizing mission.

Thereby, French was the only language allowed at school and education for indigenous was composed of practical works to train obedient subjects ready to serve and feed the Empire's economy. Textbooks addressed to indigenous education were based on the ideology that, 'France considers you as its children, we want you to be honest, good and able to become excellent laborers'.⁸

Inequalities were also visible in school access. For example, in 1889, hardly 2% of school-age Muslim children (aged 6 to 14 years old) had access to schools compared to 84% for European school-age children. In 1943, slightly less than 10% of school-age Muslim children had access to schools.⁹ It was a clear paradoxical situation in provinces belonging to a democratic and egalitarian country.

On the other hand, Senegalese Tirailleurs intervened in all the colonial conflicts and the World Wars. The Senegalese Tirailleurs were a troop of soldiers within the French Army recruited in sub-Saharan French colonies. They were created by Louis Faidherbe in 1857, a military governor of Senegal (hence the name of those battalions). Senegalese Tirailleurs were mainly former slaves who were purchased by the French authorities upon release. They then signed an 'act of liberation' and an 'employment contract' for a service that lasted between 10 and 15 years.

During the First World War, about 134,000 Senegalese Tirailleurs served on the Western Front and were placed at the forefront. About 350,000 were recruited during the Second World War.

During the Liberation in the Second World War, French General Staff replaced black soldiers by white soldiers from metropolitan France, calling this action 'blanchiment' or 'whitening of the army'. Demobilized soldiers were then sent to transit camps like the camp of Thiaroye in Dakar. At the time, military authorities affirmed that the African soldiers were demobilized because they were not used to the cold. However, today some historians contest this statement by saying that the demobilization aimed to celebrate victory without the presence of black soldiers and to make it look like French people had emancipated themselves from the war.

According to the official French version, in Thiaroye on 1st December 1944, black soldiers started to shoot on French officers demanding more money. Officers were therefore obliged to respond with repression, resulting in the deaths of 35 Senegalese Tirailleurs. However, 70 years after (in 2014), this official version was contested by many researches including those of Armelle Mabon, a historian and lecturer in the University of Bretagne Sud. Armelle Mabon talked about 'a planned mass crimes' in her interview with 'Le Monde'. She said that this event was in reality organized by the French authorities to avoid paying Senegalese Tirailleurs by killing them. She affirmed that the death toll greatly exceeded 35 (between 300 and 400 deaths buried in mass graves).¹⁰

Decolonization

The rise of nationalist movements, instability, underdevelopment, corruption and violence in the colonies as well as the independence of India paved the way for decolonisation of Africa that occurred in different ways. Some were peaceful as in sub-Saharan Africa while others were very violent like those of Algeria.

For example, in Tunisia a nationalist movement (Neo Destour Party) led by Bourguiba emerged. The same way, in Morocco, the nationalist Istiqlal Party, led by Allal El-Fassi and Ahmed Balafre (supported by the sultan Mohammed Ben Youssef) became very popular. Initially, they demanded autonomy and reforms but

after the second World War, they claimed for independence. France first responded with repression. Some demonstrators were killed and the leaders were imprisoned. Then negotiations led to internal autonomy in 1954 and to independence in 1956. Nationalists leaders, Bourguiba and Mohammed Ben Youssef, became respectively president of Tunisia and King of Morocco.

French sub-Saharan Africa is the example of peaceful decolonisation. France seemed to have weaker commitments as few settlers lived there and it was already concerned by the Algerian problem. Per consequent, these colonies obtained their independence more easily, without any conflict. For example, in 1946, France established the French Union which allowed the colonized to elect deputies in the French Parliament. In 1956, the Defferre framework law (Loi-cadre Defferre) gave a considerable degree of internal autonomy to France's African territories. They could now have an autonomous assembly elected by universal suffrage. Finally, in 1958, De Gaulle asked to colonies to chose whether they want to be independent or to be a part of the French Community (The second option giving more autonomy to colonies). Except Guinea, all the colonies chose the independence and obtained it in 1960.

In Algeria decolonization was the most difficult and the bloodiest one. France had a special commitment towards Algeria as it was considered as a French department and more than 1 million Europeans called 'Pieds-Noirs' lived there. Algeria obtained its independence after a long and painful war which lasted 8 years (1954-1962). The French army responded by violence to the Algerian nationalist attacks of National Liberation Front (FLN). Massacres, summary executions and tortures were then done in both sides. This escalation of violence favored General de Gaulle's return to power. He ended the conflict by signing the Evian Agreements. The independence was finally proclaimed in 1962.

However, despite the independence, all former colonies maintains close ties with France today. This is what we can call neocolonialism.

French Neocolonialism in Africa

At the time when independences were being negotiated, France took advantage of the situation and lured its colonies to sign cooperation agreements promoting its interests. Those agreements, sometimes called as neo-colonial pacts, allowed France a direct interference in its former colonies' affairs in order to control them. This marked the beginning of French neo-colonial dominance.

De Gaulle (the President of France at the time) tried to transfer power to politicians proponents of 'La Françafrique' like Houphouët-Boigny and Léopold Senghor who became respectively the first President of the Ivory Coast and the first President of Senegal. The latter were supporting the 'paternal role' of France, believing that it was to help them after the independence. Other leaders like Silvanus Olimpio (the first President of Togo), who were in favour of a new State and to be entirely independent from France, were assassinated.

Cooperation agreements included diverse issues (economic, monetary, cultural, juridical and military...) and most of them were done in secret. They aimed not only to provide means in order to form new armies capable of facing the Cold War pressures (size, training, provision of weapons - everything was planned). But they also consisted in maintaining the ties that held Africans under the domination of France.

Through the same way, these agreements imposed French as the official language of the new territories and required colonies to retain the franc CFA as the national currency. Furthermore, they provided France with privileged access to its former colonies' raw materials and markets. Economic cooperation agreements maintained trade preferences between France and new independent States. In return, France had to guarantee national security and provide a steady flow of aid. In other words, it had to

protect its former colonies, provide them with military assistance and help them to develop through economic assistance (ODA/Official Development Assistance).

The planned cooperations were no less than continued dependence. It was actually the transition from colonialism to neocolonialism. Just after the proclamation of independence, there were eight agreements signed with eight different African States (Cameroun, Central Africa Republic, the Comoros, the Ivory Coast, Djibouti, Gabon, Senegal and Togo). Today, even if some of them have been revised or suppressed, they still have effect on governments.

ODA; development assistance or a dependence appliance?

The Official Development Assistance (ODA) is an assistance provided by developed States, to improve the economic development and living standards of developing countries.

Since decolonization, some Northern countries (including France) have provided economic help to developing countries. France was the fifth largest global donor in 2016 with 10.1 billion euros. 1/4 of its bilateral ODA was used to subsidize sub-Saharan projects. The first rank recipient of French bilateral ODA in the region was Cameroun (€215.12 million), followed by Senegal (€79.3 million) and Ghana (€68.11 million).

However, the ODA's effectiveness is doubtful. While the proportion of development assistance (provided for more than a half-century) is increasing every year, most of the sub-Saharan countries remain dependent and poor. For instance, the total global ODA was less than 80 billion dollars in 2000 and 142.6 billion dollars in 2016, being 8.9% higher than 2015. This results in the drop of ODA for poor countries.

ODA is often criticized as an instrument of corruption. It allows statesman and elites to become richer at the expense of local population. Corrupt leaders often use the loans for their own benefits instead of financing

projects for the sake of their country. This explains the underdevelopment in most of the African countries, affected by corruption. In the book *'Dead Aid: Why Aid is not Working and How There is a Better Way for Africa'*, Dambisa Moyo, Zambian woman economist, says 'With aid's help, corruption fosters corruption, nations quickly descend into a vicious cycle of aid'. She depicts the vicious cycle of aid, 'In response to growing poverty, donors give more aid, which continues the downward spiral of poverty. This is the vicious cycle of aid'.

On the other hand, developed countries use ODA as a means of pressure on developing countries. African States, getting deeper in debt, are compelled to remain subject to Northern needs. This situation is helping to accentuate their poverty instead of improving the situation. To ensure its effectiveness, ODA needs to be reviewed urgently.

Trade Relations Between France and Africa

France and Africa have a special trade relationship. Economic and trade relations between France and Africa are characterized by diverse factors due to changes in French and African economies but also to the colonial and postcolonial historical past.

During the Cold War, France maintained strong political and economic links with its former colonies fearing communist and capitalist expansion. It considered new African states as an essential element of its international influence hence provided them with assistance and budgetary support. The collapse of the Berlin Wall, the end of the USSR, the enlargement of Europe and the acceleration of globalization resulted into standardization in France-Africa relations.

Despite everything, France remains an important trade partner for Africa. It is the second largest European exporter to the continent after Germany. According to 'France Diplomatie' over a third of French exporters export to Africa.

Bilateral trade between France and the Ivory Coast remains strong and is an important feature of the larger relationships between the two countries. In fact, the Ivory Coast accounted for about 32% of French exportations to Western Africa in 2018. Conversely, the majority of French imports from Western Africa come from Ivory Coast. In September 2018, we could observe trade surpluses for France with every Western African country. This means that it exported more than it imported. Except for the Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger and Togo, French exports to Western African countries increased.

Moreover, the French public agency, Business France, encourage French companies to invest in Africa. Each year it organises 'Ambition Africa' event to facilitate French and African businesses to meet over three days. The latter aims to familiarize French businesses that are not yet present in Africa with the continent's key trade issues.

All of this proves French special interest in Africa, that is also manifested by economic and trade agreements since decolonization. The Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) is one current example of these agreements at the European level. Research proves that foreign aid promotes exports for the donor country (France in our case). Per consequent, the special trade relationship between France and Africa cannot only be explained by the colonial historical past but also by the economic assistance that France gives to sub-Saharan countries.

However, nowadays, even if 'la Grande nation' has not lost sight of its own interests, it is losing market share due to the growing competition from emerging countries, especially from China.

French Companies in Africa

Following the 1980's wave of privatization and due to Africa's natural resources, Northern and emerging countries' firms have been predominant in Africa. According to 'France Diplomatie', in 2017, there were more than 2,109 French subsidiaries in the continent. In order to enhance their presence, those companies invest heavily. For instance, French FDI flows

to Africa have increased tenfold between 2000 and 2017. Nevertheless it had the third largest FDI stock after the UK and the USA in 2017.

French companies maintain a massive presence in the ex-colonies and intervene in several sectors such as:

- Energy (example: Total)
- Transport (example: Air France)
- Industry (example: Lafarge)
- Construction (example: Bouygues, Sogea-Satom)
- Services (example: BNP Paribas, Bolloré)
- Mass distribution (example: CFAO)
- Agro-industry (example: Bel)
- Telecommunication (example: Orange, France Telecom)

Total is making one-third of its hydrocarbon production in Africa. Eramet is producing manganese alloys for steel industry in Gabon. Bolloré has hectares of palm groves in Cameroun. Orange is present in 19 African countries and affirms to have more than 100 million African clients. Three French banks such as Banque National de Paris, Société Générale and Crédit Lyonnais had accounted for some 70% of the turnover of all banks within the Franc CFA zone in 2006.

Economic Exploitation

Besides special trade relations between France and Africa, the French do not hesitate to exploit Africa economically. It is the case when they intervene in Africa's monetary policy or when they exploit Africa's natural resources. Some people even denounce that France gets rich thanks to resources in its former colonies lands.

One example of this exploitation is the CFA Franc (African Financial Community or Cooperation Franc) which was created in December 1945 under the government of De Gaulle, and is the last colonial currency still working today. It is

the common currency of 14 African States in Central and Western Africa (+ The Comoros) bounded by a policy of monetary cooperation. There are two monetary institutions for the two respective zones namely the Central Bank of Central African States (CEMAC) and the Central Bank of Western African States (UEMOA), both influenced by the Bank of France, with the right to veto over decisions.

While France presently supports the advantages of this currency for Africa, many economists like Demba Moussa Dembélé accuse it to slow African countries' development down, 'the CFA Franc is an obstacle to the economic development because it does not benefit small and medium-sized enterprises'.

From the perspective of France, this currency has many advantages for Africa because it offers a fixed exchange rate with euro (1€ = 655 CFA), price stability, free movement of capital within the CFA Franc zone and unlimited convertibility to euro. Countries using the CFA Franc might have 'a certain credibility on the international level' and must be attractive for foreign investment. However, if those advantages do not allow the development of Africa, what good are they for? And in whose benefits are they for?

It is the French Treasury that guarantees the unlimited convertibility of the CFA Franc to euro. In return, countries in the CFA Franc zone are required to deposit 50% of their foreign exchange surpluses into a French operations account. Besides, due to the fixed parity, countries that use the CFA Franc suffer from the highly valued euro and have difficulties to export their goods because their prices are not competitive. For example, they cannot devalue the currency or create money according to their needs. On the other hand, they purchase most of the foreign goods in a strong currency (euro) while they sell local products in dollars (a weaker currency). Per consequent, they have higher expenditures and lower revenues. Fixed parity with euro seems to benefit more foreign investors who want to repatriate their money.

African economists denounce a 'monetary servitude'. According to Demba Moussa Dembélé, those bank deposits 'deprive concerned countries of cash'. 'Can you imagine the European Central Bank deposit 50% of their exchange reserves to Washington? This seems to be unthinkable' affirmed Dembélé.

On the other hand, resource-rich countries (like most of the African States) are among the less developed countries. There is a paradox that many economists label as 'resource curse', which leaves us with question. Indeed, Niger, which has uranium, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, which has diamonds, gold and cobalt are two of the 10 poorest countries of the world. What are the reasons for this?

On the one hand, it is difficult to manage and regulate natural resources when there are corruption, political crisis, embezzlement and traffickers. According to a 2014 report of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 19% of corruption cases occur in extractive industries (mining, oil and gas sector) that concerned many African States. As Angel Gurría (the Secretary-General of the OECD) pointed out, corruption causes significant damage to the country's economic growth and development, which is one of the reasons for Africa's underdevelopment.

On the other hand, the situation will not improve so long as Northern governments (including France) support and finance corrupted regimes faithful to their interests. In fact, Africa suffers from Northern countries' commitment to exploit their natural resources and become more powerful. Many Northern multinational firms, present in the African continent, are accused of looting and misappropriation of funds. Their activities often receive criticism and people denounce their plundering of natural resources that disrespect the environment and the rights of the workers.

For example, Total was sued by NGOs that believe the oil company was not respecting the French legislation imposing a 'duty of vigilance'

abroad. Its Tilenga project in Ouganda could reportedly lead to 50,000 people displacement and can have serious consequences on the environment.¹¹

Similarly, in Arlit (Niger), Orano (ex Areva) has been mining uranium since 1976. Its exploitation causes serious damage on people and the environment that Amina Weira, a Nigerian director denounced in her documentary *'la colère dans le vent'*. In fact, during a part of the year, radioactive winds of sand blew and covered up the whole city because of Orano's activity. As radioactivity is invisible, people are not informed of the potential threat. 'Since my childhood, I have been seeing people suffering strange disease that cannot be named' she says.

Furthermore, unpaid taxes have negative impacts on local populations: less funding for infrastructures, environmental conservation, education, health and feeding program. It is difficult to prove embezzlement with figures because there is a lack of transparency due to corruption. However, progress has been made thanks to Publish What You Pay (a group of civil society organizations that advocates for financial transparency in the extractive industry).

French Military Presence in Africa

Despite the independences, France has maintained a military presence in Africa. Defense agreements allowed French troops to intervene in the continent since the 1960s. Africa has been the setting for 60 military operations where France has been involved since the independence. This also constitutes a pillar of neocolonialism.

- There are two types of French military presence abroad; Opex and pre-positioned forces.
- Opex are military missions that initially aim to maintain peace. 45% of Opex troops are deployed in Africa.
- Pre-positioned forces are deployed permanently outside the metropolitan

France. Today, France has four permanent bases in Africa; Djibouti, Senegal, Gabon and the Ivory Coast, all being former colonies. Those forces have a strategic role, which is to protect France and its economic interests as well as intervene quickly when necessary.

Today more than 20,000 French soldiers are deployed outside the metropolitan France. Claiming to be an advocate of peace, France intervenes in many African conflicts using the pretext of 'intervention against terrorism' or 'help to restore security at the request of the country concerned President'. This was the case with Operation Serval in Mali (2013-2014) and Operation Barkhane in the Sahel since 2014.

Derived from a misdivision (due to colonization), many African States are inhabited by several ethnic groups with different cultures and religions. Ethnic differences, poverty and political instability are thus major sources of conflict threatening the continent. For instance, Mali is divided between more than 10 different ethnic groups. The Malian conflict started when some terrorists (AQMI, ANSAR DINE, MUJAO) and an arabo-berber group (Touaregs) invaded North Mali.

The image of France coming to deal with terrorism may be true, but it loses value when its sole purpose is to preserve French interests when they are threatened. In fact, the repression of rebel movements or the elimination of terrorist groups means less disputes, less opponents and by anyway an easier implantation and exploitation of natural resources. For example, during the Operation Serval, it first secured the cities of Gao and Kidal, both being potential zones of uranium exploitation.

French intervention in African conflicts seems to be useless because most of the time it does not resolve the problems. For instance, neither territorial problems are solved nor safety is insured in Mali today. Furthermore, French soldiers did little to stop the bloodbath when the Hutu regime in Rwanda murdered about 800,000

Tutsis in the 1994 genocide. All of these events question their involvement as peacekeepers and prove just how incapable they are to solve problems.

Moreover, there seems to be a lack of coherence in French interventions when they support some African dictators or corrupt leaders (who are in favor of French interests) on the one hand and fight for freedom and Human Rights on the other hand. It is the case with Idriss Déby, the president of Tchad since 1990. Déby, in favour of 'La Françafrique', is known for his authoritarian practices (which do not respect Human Rights), and is supported by France. This is a paradoxical situation because it is coming from a country that promotes peace.

Dusk of 'Françafrique, Dawn of 'Chinafrique'

To put it in a nutshell, 'La Françafrique' changed aspects according to the economic and geopolitical context over time. Even if relations between France and Africa are weaker

today than they were in the colonial times, 'La Françafrique' is not completely over as François Hollande affirmed. Indeed, insofar as the CFA Franc exists, cooperation and defense agreements are not suppressed and France interferes in African affairs according to its needs, we cannot speak of an eventual end of 'La Françafrique'. Africa and its resources are still a topical issue in French politics.

However, today France is facing growing competition from emerging countries especially from China, which has been the largest trading partner of the continent in recent years. Chinese firms are challenging those in French in many sectors. For example, Bolloré has lost the construction project of a railway line connecting the Ivory Coast to Benin against a Chinese company. Moreover, according to a survey published by 'Afrobaromètre' in 2016, 63% of Africans are in favour of the Chinese presence. The French influence decreases while the Chinese one increases. We may talk about a transition from 'Françafrique' to 'Chinafrique' in the future.

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