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**SINO-FRENCH COMPETITION IN AFRICA
ACCORDING TO OFFENSIVE REALIST PERSPECTIVE**

MASTER'S THESIS

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PROLOGUE

It is always very hard to be objective in social sciences, most certainly in International Relations when there are different allegiances and excessive amount of possible ideologies. Finding tangible facts to derive analysis to the international events is always hard.

During my academic studies in the different fields like political science and communication studies I often encountered with abstract analysis made with social constructivist approaches or holistic analysis practically saturated with ideologies. With this thesis I will try a different approach widely popular during the Cold War. I will try to understand and later explain the military interventions and economic relations of countries like France and China in Africa with power politics and neorealist international relations theories.

I need to thank my academic advisor Assoc. Prof. Enes Bayraklı for his patience.

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But more than anything else I must thank my wife Ayçin for being on my side anytime I needed. She inspired me with everything I did in at least the ten years of my life. When the inspiration is insufficient for me to accomplish any given task, she supported me. When the goal seems practically impossible for me to reach, she led by example and accomplishes something equivalent or harder before me to prove it is actually feasible. I cannot think any single thing that I did by myself without her in the last 15 years. Thank you *ma chérie*.

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ÖZET

SALDIRGAN REALİST BAKIŞ AÇISIYLA AFRİKA'DAKİ ÇİN-FRANSA REKABETİ

İkinci dünya savaşının sonunda neredeyse tüm Afrika devletleri bir şekilde bağımsızlıklarına kavuştular. Bu durum yeni kurulan devletlerin eski kolonyal yöneticileriyle bağlantılarının koptuğu anlamına gelmemektedir. Öyle ki bazı bilim adamlarına göre dekolonizasyon Afrika'da asla tam manasıyla gerçekleşmemiştir.¹

Çin'in Dünya Ticaret Örgütüne kabulü tüm diğer coğrafyaları etkilediği gibi Afrika'daki yerleşik ekonomik ve siyasi durumu da derinden sarsmıştır. Hızla büyüyen Çin'in doğal kaynak, Emtia ve pazarlara olan ihtiyacı 19. Yüzyıldaki Afrika'nın kolonileştirilmesi ile büyük benzerlikler taşımaktaydı.

Bu tez Fransa'nın Afrika'da gerçekleştirdiği askeri müdahalelerin arkasındaki sebepleri incelemektedir. Neorealist bağlamda sebep sonuç ilişkileri kurularak Afrika kıtasında gerçekleşen uluslararası politik gelişmeler, süper güçler arasındaki politik rekabet merkeze alınarak açıklanmaya çalışılmaktadır. Bu çalışma için Afrika'da dört ülkeye odaklanılmaktadır; Fildişi Sahilleri, Mali, Orta Afrika Cumhuriyeti ve Libya. Askeri müdahalelerden önce ve sonra yaşanan gelişmeler kronolojik olarak incelenmekte ve Fransa'nın ve Çin'in bölgeye olan ekonomik ve politik yaklaşımları arasındaki bağlantı bulunmaya çalışılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Uluslararası İlişkiler; Afrika; Neo-kolonyalizm; Saldırgan Realizm

Tarih: Haziran 2020

¹ Amadi, L. (2012). Africa: Beyond the new dependency: A political economy. *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 6(8), 191-203.

ABSTRACT

SINO-FRENCH COMPETITION IN AFRICA ACCORDING TO OFFENSIVE REALIST PERSPECTIVE

Almost all the territories ruled by oversea colonial empires in Africa gained their independence after the Second World War. It did not change the fact that most of those newly independent countries did not cease their connections with their former colonial rulers. For some scholars, the decolonization of Africa did not happen and in one form or another the colonial relationship endures to this day.²

The admission of China to the World Trade Organization changed the political and economic status quo in Africa as well as in any other regions. Chinese search for commodities, natural resources and markets have stark resemblance with early colonial goals of the European states. After the original *Scramble for Africa* it is possible that we are witnessing a new, yet unnamed scramble.

This thesis aims to analyze the reasons behind the military interventions carried out by France in Africa and the application of neorealist approaches to the modern events are deemed useful to demonstrate that. The demonstration of the relevance of neorealist approaches is a byproduct in this context. Four countries in Africa have been chosen for the issues on hand: Ivory Coast, Mali, Central African Republic, and Libya. The chronology of the events happened prior and after the interventions are investigated and to find out the connections between the economic and political events in Africa, Chinese and French policies are analyzed.

Key Words: International Relations; Africa; Neo-colonialism; Offensive Realism

Date: June 2020

² Ibid.

LIST OF ABBREVIATION

AQIM	: Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
AU	: African Union
CAR	: Central African Republic
ECOWAS	: Economic Community of West African States
EU	: European Union
MNLA	: Malayan National Liberation Army
NATO	: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PRC	: Peoples Republic of China
UN	: United Nations
UNSC	: United Nations Security Council
USA	: United States of America

1. INTRODUCTION

The instability and constant conflicts in Africa are an open wound for all concerned. Most of the global foreign aid is pouring to the region even though there are ample natural resources and a very young and dynamic demography in the region, For one reason or another China and the other traditional donors in Africa (western developed countries such as France and United States) do not coordinate or even cooperate.³⁴

Recent military involvement of the French state in the African region looks like a repetitive old habit of France in her perceived back yard.⁵ French army intervened many times to the regional conflicts in Africa, primarily to safeguard the French interests acquiring the nick name “*Gendarme de l’Afrique*” infamously.⁶

Prior to the election of the President Francois Hollande it seemed like the trend was already changing to a more passive France in the African theatre. The Socialist Party program regarding to the military affairs were consistently anti interventionist. A complete withdrawal from Afghanistan and a large cut back from military budget were along the few proof of that.⁷ The indifference toward the African affairs of the then candidate Francois Holland was stark. The repeated slogan of ”African Solutions to African Problems” was eagerly adopted by the socialist candidate.⁸ Still, during the 2010s

³ Condon, Madison, China in Africa: What the Policy of Nonintervention Adds to the Western Development Dilemma (2012). Praxis: The Fletcher Journal of Human Security, Vol. 27, 2012. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2693220>

⁴ Dreher, A., & Fuchs, A. (2015). Rogue aid? An empirical analysis of China's aid allocation. Canadian Journal of Economics/Revue Canadienne D'économique, 48(3), 988–1023. <https://doi.org/10.1111/caje.12166>

⁵ Gregory, S. (2000). The French Military In Africa: Past And Present. African Affairs, 99(396), 435–436. doi: 10.1093/afraf/99.396.435

⁶ Wyss. (2013). The Gendarme Stays in Africa: Frances Military Role in Côte d'Ivoire. African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review, 3(1), 81. doi: 10.2979/africonfpeacrevi.3.1.81

⁷ Cole, A., Meunier, S., & Tiberj, V. (2013). From Sarkozy to Hollande: The New Normal? *Developments in French Politics* 5, 1–18. doi: 10.1007/978-1-137-34917-0_1

⁸ Gebrewold, B. (2010). The Cynicism of “African Solutions for African Problems.” *African Security*, 3(2), 80–103. doi: 10.1080/19392206.2010.485509

French army deployed thousands of troops in Africa, deposing presidents, trying to resolve civil wars and launching wide scale operations using combined arms approaches.⁹

There are many books, dissertations and thesis explaining the attitude of the French governments using constructivism in International Relations Theory,¹⁰ exaggerating the perceived risks of immigration towards France and downplaying the importance of great power competitions.¹¹ Many countries interests are swelled parallel to the economic opportunities in Africa¹² including Turkey,¹³ Brazil,¹⁴ Russia,¹⁵ Saudi Arabia,¹⁶ United Arab Emirates¹⁷ and India.¹⁸ Most of those countries potentially tries to carve out spheres of influence in the continent, still, none of the above mentioned have a realistic, short term possibility to be a dominant power in the region surpassing United States or even France. The only real competitor in the African affairs is China.¹⁹ The trade volume between China and Africa already surpassed the trade between France and Africa by 2006 and United States by 2008.²⁰

⁹ Karbo, T., & Virk, K. (2019). *The Palgrave handbook of peacebuilding in Africa*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

¹⁰ Erforth, B. (2020). *Contemporary French Security Policy in Africa On Ideas and Wars*. Cham: Springer International Publishing. doi: 10.1007/978-3-030-17581-8

¹¹ Uemura, M. (2018). EU Multi-layered Migration Governance and the Externalization of French Migration Management: Analysis of Political Dynamics Driving the Construction of Complex Migration Regime. *Evolving Diversity and Interdependence of Capitalisms Evolutionary Economics and Social Complexity Science*, 211–233. doi: 10.1007/978-4-431-55001-3_8

¹² Bodomo, P. A. (2017). *Globalization of foreign investment in africa - the role of europe, china*. Emerald Publishing Limited.

¹³ Rudincová, K. (2014). New player on the scene: Turkish engagement in Africa. *Bulletin of Geography. Socio-Economic Series*, 25(25), 197–213. doi: 10.2478/bog-2014-0039

¹⁴ Bond, P. (2018). Can the BRICS Re-Open the “Gateway to Africa”? South Africa’s Contradictory Facilitation of Divergent Brazilian, Russian, Indian and Chinese Interests. *Africa and the World*, 403–431. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-62590-4_18

¹⁵ Marten, K. (2019). Russia’s Back in Africa: Is the Cold War Returning? *The Washington Quarterly*, 42(4), 155–170. doi: 10.1080/0163660x.2019.1693105

¹⁶ Donelli, F., & Dentice, G. (2020). Fluctuating Saudi and Emirati Alignment Behaviours in the Horn of Africa. *The International Spectator*, 55(1), 126–142. doi: 10.1080/03932729.2019.1706389

¹⁷ Quilliam, N. (2019). Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Turkey: The Political Drivers of ‘Stabilisation.’ *Stabilising the Contemporary Middle East and North Africa*, 139–161. doi: 10.1007/978-3-030-25229-8_7

¹⁸ Pant, H. V. (2016). India in Africa and Central Asia: part of the new “Great Game.” *Indian Foreign Policy*, 149–160. doi: 10.7228/manchester/9781784993368.003.0014

¹⁹ Mckinnon, R. I. (2010). China in Africa: The Washington Consensus versus the Beijing Consensus. *International Finance*, 13(3), 495–506. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2362.2010.01270.x>

²⁰ Dyer, G., Russell, A., MacNamara, W., Blas, J., & Green, M. (2008, January 24). AFRICA-CHINA TRADE. (W. Walli & S. Gray, Eds.) *Financial Times SPECIAL REPORT*.

Chinese loans to Africa starting from 2 billion dollars in 2005, exponentially increased every year and reached more than 30 billions dollars in 2016.²¹ Parallel to the debt trap diplomacy utilized by China, the western criticism to the Chinese debt policies toward developing countries also increased.²² The opaque nature of Chinese debts²³ did not also help to ease the criticism towards Chinese foreign aid policy. In the last part of the 2010s Chinese debts becomes a large part of the overall debts of the continent. The no strings attached nature of the Chinese debts regarding the human right and political openness issues makes the debtors prone to misuse and corruption.²⁴

According to Offensive Realism Theory, great powers seek to dominate their near surroundings and create a hegemony in their geography. If a country can accomplish to create a hegemony, then it seeks to prevent others to do the same in their geography. The only clear regional hegemon, United States did exactly this against Wilhelmine and Nazi Germany, Soviet Union and Imperial Japan. China has serious competitors in her near abroad such as Japan and South Korea in North East Asia with the backing of United States; Australia and Japan in Western Pacific with again the United States backing; India in South Asia; Russia in Central Asia. There are also many other American partners in the South East Asia and the Greater Indo-Pacific regions.

Even though there are also a competition for influence amongst countries such as Egypt and South Africa in the region and Russia and Turkey from other continents, those countries cannot be taken into account as a peer competitor in Africa compared to China by a large margin in many areas including financial aids and as a trade partner. The traditional partner that the United States can rely upon in Africa against the competition against China is France. In this context, the encouragement of successive American

²¹ Zhao, S. (2014). A Neo-Colonialist Predator or Development Partner? Chinas engagement and rebalance in Africa. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 23(90), 1033–1052. doi: 10.1080/10670564.2014.898893

²² Brautigam, D. (2019). A critical look at Chinese ‘debt-trap diplomacy’: the rise of a meme. *Area Development and Policy*, 5(1), 1–14. doi: 10.1080/23792949.2019.1689828

²³ Grimm, S., Rank, R., Schickerling, E., & McDonald, M. (2011, August 1). Transparency of Chinese aid : an analysis of the published information on Chinese external financial flows. Handle Proxy. <http://hdl.handle.net/10019.1/21430>.

²⁴ China offers Africa billions, 'no strings attached'. (2018, September 3). Retrieved from <https://www.dw.com/en/china-offers-africa-billions-no-strings-attached/a-45333627>

governments toward France to have a greater role in the African affairs becomes more understandable.

This thesis will try to explain the new French interventionist approach to Africa with offensive realism theory instead of the much more popular constructivist theories and ideational analysis. With a possible new peer competition²⁵ on the global stage and the newly rediscovered containment policies of United States against the upcoming global superpower China, this thesis will try to clarify the central position of the state actors. This does not mean the non-state actors are irrelevant; still, this thesis will try to convince the reader to assume it would be more beneficial for a foreign policy analyst to look into the actions of the states rather than trying to dive into the myriad of the non-state actors with their differing ideologies and distinct global and regional goals.

1.1. HYPOTHESIS

France's recent interventions in Africa were discussed primarily with historical context of French Imperial policy and French sphere of influence. It is mostly researched with France taking the primary role and all states and non-states actors in the region in secondary roles. Many researchers focused on the ideologies of the insurgent groups and relationships between those groups and states. Many other researchers focused on the good governance and policy choices of the African leader in crisis. In this thesis, I will try to look at the bigger picture and try to explain the reengagement of France from global perspective and the Great Power competition.

I have two hypotheses; first one is about a general outlook to the international relations in Africa by the external powers and the second one is about choosing compatible international relations theory for French behavior in Africa. The first hypothesis is *The real reason behind the French reengagement in Africa is great power competition between United States and China. Even though all the ideological preference of the states and non-state actors in the region has an importance, they are irrelevant in*

²⁵ Dobbins, J., Shatz, H. J., & Wyne, A. (2018). Russia is a Rogue, Not a Peer; China is a Peer, Not a Rogue: Different Challenges, Different Responses. RAND ARROYO CENTER SANTA MONICA CA SANTA MONICA. doi:10.7249/pe310

this context. The second hypothesis is French interventionism in Africa can be better explained by the offensive realism and hegemonic behavior.

1.2. FRAMEWORK

This thesis's goal is to achieve an almost unidimensional causality while researching the development in Africa and the decision making of dominant states like France, People Republic of China and to some degree United States of America.

Geographical framework of the thesis is centered in and around four African countries. Ivory Coast, Mali, Central African Republic, and Libya. First three countries are sub-Saharan states that were colonized by France and after the decolonization were routinely witnessed French military interventions in their histories. Libya is an outlier because it was ruled by Ottomans and Italians consecutively during the colonial era. Libya was also comparably much more stable during the Gaddafi era and by all means a North African or Mediterranean country rather than a sub-Saharan state. Still the role French army played in the military intervention in Libya in 2011 and the events unfold after the collapse of the Libyan state with its implications forced my hands to include Libya in the thesis.

1.2.1. Structural Realism

Realism in International relations was the dominant school in international relations studies for a long time since its inception. There are many influential thinkers through the ages contributed to the realist theory even before it is started to be called as realism. Thucydides, Thomas Hobbes and Niccolò Machiavelli are amongst them. There are four main tenets of realist approaches. They are groupism, anarchy, egoism, and power politics according to *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*.²⁶

1. Groupism refers to the nation states, because today they are most important and cohesive groups among human organizations. Thus, leaders and international organization are marginally important compared to the states.

²⁶ Reus-Smit, C., Snidal, D. (2008). *The Oxford handbook of international relations*. Oxford University Press.

2. The paramount nature of the states causes anarchy, so no rules can be enforced to the states by a supranational entity.
3. States are driven by self-interest more than any other reasons. They are like individual humans are egoists.
4. In an unruly environment when all the states are expected to be driven by their narrow self-interests, states naturally try to augment their relative powers to ensure self-preservation.²⁷

After many attempts to create a *grand theory*, new researchers in the International Relations are start to refer all the realist works of the interwar and early cold war years as classical realism.²⁸ The term to can also encompass all realist works from Thucydides to Morgenthau according to scholars.²⁹ In this context classical realism is not just a mere sub school of realist theory, on the contrary it is the tradition of realist publication with all its diversity until Waltz published the *Theory of International Politics* in 1979.

Morgenthau's *Politics among Nations* needs to be mentioned separately. In his seminal book Morgenthau seeks to transform tradition to a standalone realist theory of international politics.

After Morgenthau, Waltz tries to solve some of the perceived vagueness and incoherence and contradiction about some concepts. Concepts like "*National Interest*" and "*the Balance of Power*" were not sufficiently defined by Morgenthau himself or subsequent theorists coherently. By creating a framework eventually called as *neorealism*, Waltz clarified many earlier ideas about system of states and the ways states interact.

Structural realism or neorealism is the more modernized version of the classical realism. Even though it kept the central assumptions, it was reformulated and gave more emphasis to the balance of power. According to the Neorealists, there are three plausible

²⁷ Idib.

²⁸ Ashley, R. K. (1984). The poverty of neorealism. *International Organization*, 38(2), 225–286. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020818300026709>

²⁹ Lebow, R. N. (2003). *The tragic vision of politics: ethics, interests, and orders*. Cambridge University Press.

systems. These are unipolar, bipolar, and multipolar systems. Since most of the theoreticians worked on the issue lived in a bipolar world, naturally they are more inclined to accept that the bipolar world is the most stable system possible.

The occurrence of neorealism while reviving the scholarly activity in the area did not solve all the vagueness in the theoretical framework. Waltz's work also is described as abstract.³⁰ More importantly Waltz ignored possible variations related to more tangible concept such as geography and technology. Two new realist school shaped after this realization, namely, offensive realism and defensive realism.³¹

1.2.1.1. Offensive Realism

Offensive realism is one of the more prominent school of thought of neorealism. Even though there are several variants of neorealism put forward by distinguished scholars like R. Shweller and R. Gilpin, this study will interpret the issue about the French interventions in Africa with using the offensive neorealism described in the book "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics" by John J. Mearsheimer.³²

There are many shared main tenets of Offensive Realism with the other realist school of thoughts, especially with the Defensive Realism. States are rational actors and Great Powers are the main actors in an anarchic system. Also, every state has some sort of offensive military capacities. Most importantly, states can never be sure about the intentions of other states.

The offensive realism theory is especially chosen to explain the issue on hand because there are some differences with the other realist thoughts. For example, buck-passing to preserve capabilities and power-maximizing to ensure hegemony are important assets of a state according to the offensive realism. These terms will be further explained in the relevant topics.

³⁰ Reus-Smit, C., & Snidal, D. (2012). *The Oxford handbook of international relations*. Oxford University Press.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Mearsheimer, J. J. (2014). *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

One of the assumptions in the offensive realism theory is the stopping power of water.³³ This is applicable to the reluctance of United States power projection on the Africa region. The same assumption about the stopping power of the water must be ignored for the sake of perceived Chinese ambitions in the Africa continent. Moreover, this theory is criticized because it does not put a greater emphasis on domestic politics. This is one of the most important weakness of the theory. This weakness does not hinder the practicality of the theory since there are changes in the governing political parties from conservatives to socialists then to liberals in the France³⁴ in this particular time period but the political determination about the interventionism in Africa did not change at all.

Another issue is the geographic restrictiveness of the hegemony described in the theory. According to Mearsheimer, states seek to be the hegemon in their neighborhood before trying to prevent others to do the same or trying to dominate the world. In this case, the possibility of a state trying to create a hegemony in a foreign continent is thoroughly discussed. Further explanation of this divergence with the theory described in the John J. Mearsheimer's book can be found in the upcoming parts of the thesis.

1.2.1.2. Regional Hegemony

This thesis assumes, there is only one clear regional hegemon who can hope to achieve global dominance in the first quarter of the 21st century which is The United States of America with her regional hegemony in the Western Hemisphere (Americas). The USA tries to prevent the establishment of other regional hegemons on the different parts of the world. The establishment of any other regional hegemon could cause a new cold war like the last one between two peer competitors.

There is also only one possible peer competitor in the world against the United States. China seeks to establish regional hegemony in her region.³⁵ The problem for China is there are many allies and military contingent of the United States in China's near

³³ Mearsheimer, J. J. (2014). *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, pp. 44, 77, 81, 126-27, 136, 157, 170, 237, 247, 264, 321, 432, 450

³⁴ Erforth, B. (2019). Ever Just the Same? French Foreign and Security Policy in Africa. *Contemporary French Security Policy in Africa*, 9–23. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-17581-8_2

³⁵ Liff, A. P., & Ikenberry, G. J. (2014). Racing toward Tragedy?: China's Rise, Military Competition in the Asia Pacific, and the Security Dilemma. *International Security*, 39(2), 52–91. https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00176

abroad. Amongst them is South Korea, Japan and Taiwan in Far East, Australia, and New Zealand in southern Pacific.³⁶ There are also many strong countries wary of the Chinese dominance in the region that are ready to accept USA helps against China, such as Vietnam and India.³⁷ Also, even though clearly not a USA ally, Russia as a country with strong connection with Central Asia is not keen to lose her influence in the region to another country.³⁸

The territorial disputes in South China Sea is in the scope of the world thanks to the highly publicized island buildings. The Taiwan dispute is also a well-documented and always remains in the agenda of regional and global news coverages. China is clearly trying to be a regional hegemon with mixed success.

Chinese prospect for regional dominance in her near abroad does not seem plausible in the near future. At first glance, this situation greatly hampers Chinese bit of hegemony and being a peer competitor against United States, China can possibly circumvent these problems with seeking regional dominance in another region, for example Africa.

³⁶ Zhao, S. (2008). China's Global Search for Energy Security: cooperation and competition in Asia-Pacific. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 17(55), 207–227. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670560701809460>

³⁷ Wishnick, E. (2014). *Russia, china, and the united states in central asia: prospects for great. Lulu Com.*

³⁸ Lee, J.-E. (2016). *Competition between China and Russia over Central Asia.* <https://doi.org/10.14257/astl.2016.129.28>

2. AFRICA AND GREAT POWER POLITICS

The scramble for Africa in the 21st century is comparable but different from the original partitioning of Africa between the European powers at the end of 19th century up until the First World War. Apart from the resource oriented new scramble or neocolonialist approach, the first partition was much more structured and regulated.³⁹

After the Berlin Conferences in 1884 and 1885, the African territories quickly and definitively partitioned, by 1905 with the notable exception of Ethiopia almost all the independent kingdoms and empires indigenous to the continent disappeared from the map.⁴⁰ European powers tried to legalize their occupation in the eyes of other European powers with minimal administrative costs to actually rule the land. Still at the end document of the conference some ruleset had been established and the Principle of Effectivity had been introduced to prevent founding a colony only in name. Thus, European powers had to establish a firmer rule in their respective territories in Africa.

In the 21st century, the new so-called scramble for Africa is not about territorial control. It has a laser focus on commodities needed by industrial powers. Chinese People Republic, after promoting the decolonization and supporting newly created states in Africa for their efforts to weaken their links with their former colonial overlords quickly turned to be a primary customer for African commodities and a prominent investor in the continent. The benevolence of the direct investments and loans to build communication, energy and transportation infrastructure will be discussed on the title Chinese Debt Trap more thoroughly.

As a regional guarantor, security provider, trade partner, large scale investor and migration destination, France is the traditional European partner for every country with a

³⁹ Moyo, S., Jha, P. K., & Yeros, P. (2019). *Reclaiming Africa: scramble and resistance in the 21st century*. Singapore: Springer. doi: 10.1007/978-981-10-5840-0

⁴⁰ Ganiage, J., & Brett, Y. (1985). North Africa. In R. Oliver & G. Sanderson (Eds.), *The Cambridge History of Africa* (The Cambridge History of Africa, pp. 159-207). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CHOL9780521228039.005

security challenge against an incursion or in risk of a possible coup d'état. France's motives are not always benign, and she is always ready to depose an unruly leader from his or her seat whenever France feel like it.

France is the natural partner for in the region for united states against Chinese political and economic incursions and it does not seem coincidental that French Republic decided to return to the Military Command Structure of NATO after returning to the full membership by 2009.

2.1. FRANCE'S AFRICA POLICY: SLOW DISENGAGEMENT

By 1960 France already lost possession of most of her Africa territory due to the independence movements or gradually gaining self-rule from France by referendums, and by 1977 with Djibouti's independence French decolonization in Africa finally was completed, albeit with some notable exception in Indian Ocean.

During the decolonization period up until 1995 France kept being in deep engagement in Africa. This period is also largely overlap with Cold War. France kept intervening in Africa militarily a staggering 19 times between these years. During last years of the hyperactivity of French military in the region it became clear that it does not financially sustainable for the post-Cold War military budget of France.⁴¹ French military budget had been slashed and sharp reduction of military personnel had been made. Many army bases scattered in Africa also closed down due to the budget restriction.

Long before the time period that this thesis primarily focused, during the 1990s French policy toward Africa changed dramatically due to the scandals involving politicians and French oil companies (e.g. Elf) operating in Africa, incompetence and even an alleged misconduct during the Rwandan Civil War⁴² and supporting notorious dictators (e.g. Sese Seko in Congo) to the very end. Explaining the necessity of a large-

⁴¹ Farrell, T., Rynning, S., & Terriff, T. (2013). Transforming military power since the Cold War: Britain, France, and the United States, 1991-2012. In Transforming military power since the Cold War: Britain, France, and the United States, 1991-2012 (pp. 208–210). essay, Cambridge University Press.

⁴² Moore, J. (2017, December 13). Rwanda Accuses France of Complicity in 1994 Genocide. Retrieved August 15, 2020, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/13/world/africa/rwanda-france-genocide.html>

scale engagement in Africa became harder and harder against a French public opinion weary of new catastrophes in Africa.

France tried to patch her strategy in Africa to become more multinational. France tried to have a more back seat role, allowing even supporting African Union and United Nations peace keeping efforts through training. Still while supporting UN mandates France used boots on the ground and could not manage to not be embroiled in civil war. (e.g. Ivory Coast in 2003). By the beginning of third millennium it is apparent that France had to relinquish his role as a sole mediator in his old colonies. This downward trend of French military engagement kept going until the apparent Chinese economic engagement (along with some notable middle powers such as Brazil and Turkey) in Africa, especially West Africa, thought to be firmly in the exclusive French sphere of influence by many French politicians until the hard awakening of investment and trade data from the region become more drastic by every passing years.

2.2. CHINESE ECONOMIC INCURSION

It is hard to argue that China's attention to the African countries goes well beyond resources, markets and commodities from a contemporary perspective. After all in many elections some challengers to the incumbent actively seeks to steer popular opinion for their campaign used anti-Chinese rhetoric with success. But, from 2005 to 2016 African leaders found Chinese approach to investments and loans very attractive. For some African leaders, Chinese lax attitude against human right abuses and no string attached policy while doing business seemed like a positive change after the conditional aid packages by international financial institutions.

By claiming China and Africa are victims of the perils of imperialism together, China did a good job to hide her intention to the unsuspected African public opinion. Abusing the unsaturated African markets with cheap Chinese goods while destroying the nascent local industries in Africa, China also made many deal to buy large amount of commodities for a long period of time with fixed price to hedge against the volatile commodity prices.

Africa as always was in dire need of infrastructure investment and China was always happy to give loans for investment projects. Of course, the investment projects

were carried out by Chinese construction firms, using imported Chinese construction materials. Still, it can be argued that infrastructure investments created jobs locally thus beneficial for the African countries. Well, Chinese firms preferred to use Chinese experts as imported labor, hundred thousands of Chinese workers worked on those projects as well paying experts and return to their country when the job is done, so no substantial jobs had been created in Africa with the infrastructure projects. The locals had to do low paying unskilled jobs without developing any expertise. At least some would argue that local industries or retailers could make some profit with doing business with the imported works or maybe some local worker gain some expertise, learning something from Chinese experts. It could also be true if all the imported workers did not live in their newly build quarters only consuming mostly imported goods from China. At the very least Infrastructure will stay and create new opportunities for future developments in the country they have been built. The only new opportunities they create is doing more business with china because all the infrastructure investments are tailor made for global projects like Belt and Road Initiatives to further catalyze Chinese trade around the globe. Overall, it is a win-win situation for everyone, in China.

2.3. NEOCOLONIALISM WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTIC

China while conducting diplomacy in Africa, officially claims to have difference diplomatic operation framework then the usual overtly hierarchical power relations with the established external powers. China explain itself with being more historically informed and strengthen this view with being committed to mutual benefit, political equality and non-interference.

Until recently, China's benevolent role and largesse in the African countries welcomed with open arms. African workers did not feel exploited. But it did not also hide the fact that Africans are not aware of the broader fact that China needs to sustain its growth with African commodities and feed her people with the agriculture from African arable lands. There are many statements from African leaders and economists to show their awareness on this issue.

Zambia's Deputy Finance Minister Miles Sampa said, 'The Chinese are not our relatives or friends, they are here for business and they are our partners'.⁴³ South African leader Jacob Zuma stated in front of a large audience of Chinese and African leaders 'The unbalanced nature of Africa's burgeoning trade ties with China is "unsustainable" in the long term.'⁴⁴ Like his successor previous South African president Thabo Mbeki also warned about growing Sino-African relations resembling neocolonialism.⁴⁵

Nigeria's governor of Central Bank Lamido Sanusi summarized the issue

"The relationship carries with it a whiff of colonialism..."

The Chinese, ... buy Nigeria's crude oil. In much of Africa, they have set up huge mining operations. They have also built infrastructure. But, with exceptions, they have done so using equipment and labor imported from home, without transferring skills to local communities.

... China takes our primary goods and sells us manufactured ones. This was also the essence of colonialism. The British went to Africa and India to secure raw materials and markets. Africa is now willingly opening itself up to a new form of imperialism."⁴⁶

2.4. CHINESE AID TO AFRICA

There is another side of the medallion on this issue like every other issue. China is not an evil antagonist for everyone around the world. China has done many things to create good public opinion in almost every country and there are of course some success stories. Whether this success stories are a conclusion of a good public relations campaign or a genuine collaboration between China and any developing countries does not matter in the context of this thesis.

⁴³ Zhao op. cit.

⁴⁴ Hook, L. (2012, July 19). Zuma warns on Africa's trade ties to China. The Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/zuma-warns-on-africas-trade-ties-to-china/2012/07/19/gJQAFgd7vW_story.html.

⁴⁵ BBC. (2006, December 14). Business | Mbeki warns on China-Africa ties. BBC News. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/6178897.stm>.

⁴⁶ Sanusi, L. (2013, March 11). Africa must get real about Chinese ties. Subscribe to read | Financial Times. <https://www.ft.com/content/562692b0-898c-11e2-ad3f-00144feabdc0>.

In 2006 a summit has convened in Beijing for four weeks with participants from forty-eight African states. With a great fanfare and a wave of optimism African delegations made many business agreements with their Chinese counterparts. Everybody expected China to become the biggest trade partner of the continent very soon. Chinese EXIM bank committed 20 billion dollars initially, at the same period of time World Bank committed 17 billion dollars.

There is some skepticism from the traditional debtors of Africa but for most of the continent new Chinese loans were too good to pass. Traditional debtors like IMF, European Union and United States stated that, they will not be around for another debt relief like before if the new debts from China cannot be managed successfully. Some officials from World Bank also stated that Chinese aids and loans are only distributed amongst the resource rich countries.

There are some tangible evidences that prove it otherwise.⁴⁷ Even though some projects directly linked to the commodity exchange or revenues, and some infrastructure projects are certainly only built to deliver commodities from inland to the ports, essentially to the Chinese mainland, it would be unfair to china to claim that they are only invested in the resource rich country. The only precondition of Chinese development aid is adhering to One China policy, thus recognizing People Republic of China as the only China.

China also accused of being an enabler for brutal dictatorships, shielding them from outside pressure diplomatically and giving a lifeline with purchasing their commodities and selling military materials and ammunitions.⁴⁸ Sudan is an outspoken example in this subject. China purchased bulk of the Sudanese oil and sold large amounts of military jets and other war material to be used against the rebel held villages. Still there were many other countries that did exactly the same. Russia sold much more jets and other materials than China.⁴⁹ Canada's mining companies were active in extraction in

⁴⁷ Brautigam, D. (2019). A critical look at Chinese 'debt-trap diplomacy': the rise of a meme. *Area Development and Policy*, 5(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23792949.2019.1689828>

⁴⁸ Rich, T. S., & Recker, S. (2013). Understanding Sino-African Relations: Neocolonialism or a New Era? *Journal of International and Area Studies*, 20, 61–76.

⁴⁹ Bräutigam, D. (2011). The dragon's gift: the real story of China in Africa. In *The dragon's gift: the real story of China in Africa* (p. 283). essay, Oxford University Press.

Sudanese soil, other democratic countries like India and Malaysia kept purchasing Sudanese oil albeit Japan was the biggest customer for the oil.⁵⁰ Countries like Turkey made diplomatic dealing with Omar el Bashir⁵¹ and even Britain's investment agency urged British companies to invest in Sudan.⁵² China also made concrete effort to solve the Darfur crisis alongside with other partners.

There are other allegations against China about shoring up dictators, namely Zimbabwe's ruler Mugabe. Critics blamed China for being very lax attitude always coined the phrase of no strings attached policy of loan. Still it can be easily argued that other international donors also kept supplying corrupt regimes all along Africa with aid money. In the Zimbabwe's case China only supplied some export credit. Mugabe's supporter could possibly sell it like a huge investment for propaganda reasons but actually the credit was on strictly commercial terms, with collateral commodities and mortgages like platinum concession.

China probably does not really help to tackle the corruption problem of Africa, but it does not mean that China is actively seeking to worsen the situation. First and foremost, China always prefer that her investment pay off and her credits repaid and serviced with interests. Corruption does not help any of these and China is surely aware of it.

It is claimed that China's aid is always tied with the opportunity for Chinese corporation. It is actually a system copied from Japan. The so-called Japan's request-based system depended largely on private Japanese companies finding feasible projects and then proposing the host government the projects while applying the Japanese government for funding.⁵³ It is not a foul proof system and largely susceptible to the corruption due to the system's nature does not include a bidding process. Still it does not mean that it is not a common practice amongst traditional donors.

⁵⁰ Ibid. pg:284

⁵¹ Kirişci, K., & Kaptanoğlu, N. (2011). The Politics of Trade and Turkish Foreign Policy. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 47(5), 705–724. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2011.613226>

⁵² Lakha, S. (2018, January 4). *The UK and Sudan: Trade Relations and Human Rights*. Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust. <https://www.hart-uk.org/blog/uk-sudan-trade-relations-human-rights/>.

⁵³ Bräutigam, D. (2011). The dragon's gift: the real story of China in Africa. In *The dragon's gift: the real story of China in Africa* (p. 141). essay, Oxford University Press.

Tying the aid with commercial opportunities also criticized by other countries for other reasons, such as creating unfair subsidies for the donor country's firms.⁵⁴ It is actually a fair and well documented critic against China, and it has to be tackled multilaterally. Chinese faintheartedness about joining to the Arrangement on Officially Supported Export Credits makes it problematic to believe China's sincerity about the issue.

2.5. CONTAINMENT OF CHINA, BALANCING ACTS OF WESTERN POWERS

It is clear that western powers are not or could not compete economically with the Chinese largesse in the Africa continent. As discussed before, China cannot realistically become a hegemon in her near abroad. Her neighbors in the continent are well aware of the intentions of China from the age of the Middle Kingdom. China was a regional hegemon for a very long time in the East Asia, from Korea to Central Asian steppes to Indochina and simple public relation campaigns could not convince any country in the region that China will not try to achieve same status one more time.

Western powers, especially United States did not have a problem finding allies in the region. There are many strong and capable countries in the region. Through treaty alliances and sometimes with other ad hoc or provisional collaborations, an outside power could try to contain Chinese ambition without too many efforts. In a pitch United States even showed flexibility to cooperate with obvious adversary to contain another superpower like the cooperation with China against Soviet Union after Nixon and Mao dialogues.

For a very long time the United States left alone the black continent. Historically, United States have never been too active in the continent. Apart from establishment of Liberia and anti-piracy operations and a small incursion to Tripolitania (modern time Libya) United States were never been willing to be too active in the region if it is not a direct threat against her interests. After the announcement of Monroe Doctrine, the continent practically left alone to the machination of the European powers.

⁵⁴ Ibid

Even after the Second World War, in the heyday of the Cold War United States had local and European allies in the region against Communist encroachment. Like Portugal, South Africa and Ethiopia before their respective revolutions. United States policy outside of Americas has been always clear: Prevention of ascension of a new regional hegemon through alliances. USA also showed that he could not hesitate to directly confront any possible competition. There are some distinguished powers in Africa but because of the restrictive geography, lack of infrastructure and cultural distinctions a regional major power's chance to achieve hegemony in the continent or even in the part of the continent has never been a realistic possibility. Thus, the region has been left alone until the World Trade Center attacks happened.

France apart from the countries mentioned above had her own imperial reflexes and did not need any encouragement to be involved in the region. Still France decreased her involvement in the region by every year gradually after the decolonization. Still French army kept being the most active external military power in the continent for a long period of times.

2.5.1. Buck Passing

The term basically refers to the notion that a power tries to avoid confrontation with another emerging power in the hope of some other power eventually decide to confront the emerging power. It has been used at least 10 times in the Mearsheimer book *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* that has been the most detailed theoretical foundation of the Offensive Realism.

One of the most famous examples of buck passing is United Kingdom's appeasement policy against Nazi Germany in the hope that eventually Soviet Union will balance Germany in Eastern Europe. Consequently, Soviet Union also did the same with the Molotov Ribbentrop pact and passed the buck again to the western allies.

Even though United States tries to confront or even contain China in the greater Indo Pacific region, she was hesitant to do so in Africa. United States has many reasons to avoid confrontation but also it can be argued that United States expect China to be bogged down in Africa's internal politics in the long term. United States' own experience in the continent showed that most of the African problems are too costly or too intricate

to solve. This changed after China obviously become the largest investor and trade partner of the continent without any tangible military involvement or trying to be a responsible partner in the region. Of course, western powers expect China to not upset the balance of the power according to Chinese interests, but it was not a realistic approach all along.

United States and France relations were not always cordial about the global security issues. After the Suez Crisis president of the Republic Charles de Gaulle famously withdrew from the military command structure of the NATO. France tried to have an independent foreign policy distinct from the United States or the western alliance. France developed her own Nuclear deterrence out of the lack of confidence against united states to protect France in the event of a nuclear exchange.

From an outside perspective France did not really need too much convincing to return the theatre of Africa, still probably recognizing the challenge posed by China to her interest France tried to do so with the help of Western Alliance and returned to the Military Command Structure of NATO. Mearsheimer in his book, showed that the buck passing can be very advantageous if eventually someone else rise to confront the emerging power. In this sense United States policy was very successful.⁵⁵

2.6. UNITED STATES AS AN OFFSHORE BALANCER

Offshore balancing acts of United States in 1940 Europe and 1980 Middle East during the Iraq – Iran war was heavily analyzed and documented in the classes⁵⁶ and books of John Mearsheimer. United States gave supplies and military equipment to United Kingdom to balance Nazi Germany in Europe instead of directly committing troops in Europe. USA government during the Iran Iraq war did the same to support and later prop the losing side of the war to hamper the rise of a potential regional hegemon in the Middle East.

United States after the September 11 attacks decided to build new strategy to safeguard American interest.⁵⁷ Apart from operations against the so-called rogue states

⁵⁵ Mearsheimer, J. J. (2001). *The tragedy of great power politics*. WW Norton & Company. p. 160.

⁵⁶ Mearsheimer, J. (2014, June 24). *Imperial by Design*. Retrieved April 15, 2020, from <https://nationalinterest.org/article/imperial-by-design-4576>

⁵⁷ Biddle, S. (2005). *American grand strategy after 9/11: An assessment*. Carlisle Barracks PA: U.S. Army War College.

that harbor terrorist the strategist in United States government also decided that ungoverned territories that can be a safe haven for violent organizations can eventually become a national security problem for United States. After the Black Hawk Down Incident United States decided to not commit too much in unruly territories in Africa and tried to have a more back seat roles, supporting African states, financing AU and UN peace keeping mission in areas.

Everything changed after 9/11 and United States decided to build military base all around the world including Africa. Djibouti in Eastern Africa is chosen as a first base.⁵⁸ The United States military base is virtually adjacent to the century old and still active French base. United States also organized a joint NATO effort against piracy in the same region. Still, United States did not try to dislodge extremist violent organizations from large swathes of unruly territories in Sahel region. Arguably United States government did not intervene the area traditionally dominated by France as a sphere of influence sharing arrangement.

2.6.1. France rejoins the NATO Military

France is a founding member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Under the leadership of President Charles de Gaulle in 1966, France decided to leave the integrated military structure of NATO. Many scholars tie this development to the earlier Suez Crisis. France eventually decided to pursue an independent foreign policy instead of trying to be an equal partner with USA in the NATO. France developed her own Nuclear deterrence against the Soviet threat. It was heavily discussed that A NATO leadership under United States dominance could not possibly endure after France left, nevertheless the organization endured.⁵⁹

France did not give up from her independence policy for 43 years after that decision. 20 years after the Fall of the Wall and 18 years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union France started to participate in the peacekeeping mission with NATO allies

⁵⁸ Savell, S. (2019, January 01). This Map Shows Where in the World the U.S. Military Is Combatting Terrorism. Retrieved June 23, 2020, from <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/map-shows-places-world-where-us-military-operates-180970997/>

⁵⁹ Bryant, J. (2000). France and NATO from 1966 to Kosovo: Coming full circle? *European Security*, 9(3), 21–37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09662830008407460>

in Afghanistan and Balkans. Nicolas Sarkozy explained this decision with articulating the France's need to participate wherever the NATO objectives are discussed.

2.6.2. Fashoda Syndrome

The term is used to describe French inclination to assert dominance in areas susceptible to the British influence at the last years of the nineteenth century. The name coined after the Fashoda Incident. French army humiliated by the British army in Fashoda village thus create a complex in French foreign policy to do what is necessary to prevent anything like that in future.⁶⁰ French army was not defeated, they had to withdraw from the province they occupied.

Two centuries has been passed after the incident and French decision makers are still susceptible to the same complex against other powers encroaching in their perceived sphere of influence. After years of budget cuts and trying to disengage from African matters the Fashoda Syndrome is a good way to explain France powerful return to the continent so abruptly.

⁶⁰ Bates, D. (1984). *The Fashoda incident of 1898: encounter on the Nile*. Oxford University Press.

3. FRENCH AFRICA POLICY: EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

France had one of the biggest colonial empire of the world back in the days. Still She could not preserve the same influence as she has in the sub Saharan Africa. Even though France tried and still tries to exert influence in regions like Levant and Indochina she can never hope to command as much influence as she had in Africa.

France lost much of her clout in Africa in recent years. France is not on any of the top 5 exporter or the importer list of Africa, China is number one in both lists by great margins, still it does not prevent France to be the overall top investor in Africa. France cannot compete with Chinese prices in the region and it is also apparent that despite the meagre infrastructures of transportation networks the intra-regional trade is also increasing rapidly due to the reduction of tariffs. France's export the region is only three percent of her total export.

Still the rare commodities from the region supplies a large part of the France's energy needs. Especially the uranium import from Niger is crucial for France nuclear centrals.⁶¹ Also, there are still hundreds of thousands of French citizens registered in the region.

Maybe one of the most important things about Africa for France is that France's own image. It is obvious that France is not dominant great power globally, but France is and will stay relevant in African politics for a foreseeable future. This relevance issue is also apparent in France's internal politics. It is the only region (apart from Europe of course) in the world that France's presidential candidates actively discuss their policies publicly before elections.

3.1. FRANCAFRIQUE

Francafrique is not yet a defunct concept. President Jacques Chirac era of rebalancing the international relations with more multilateralism rather than acting the

⁶¹ Chafer, T. (2018). Franco-African Relations: Still Exceptional? The Palgrave Handbook of African Colonial and Postcolonial History, 801–819. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-59426-6_32

natural hegemon in the region and slowly distancing itself from the old hierarchical habits did not continue indefinitely. The trend quickly reversed by the Sarkozy presidency and even though president Hollande tried to preserve the image of nominal equality between France and her old colonies, it is clear that France still acts like a hegemon - albeit a reluctant one- in the region.

France is not even the number one trade partner of the region between European states, but it can still project hard power on the region. If any other states apart from a coalition of African countries intervene militarily in the region it will never be perceived as legitimate as France intervention in the near future. It is not because of the old habits of France but it actually is the old habits of regional states.

French language is a natural barrier for outside player like China. It gives France a great head start to woo students with prospects to continue their education in metropolitan France and it also makes it in favor of French media to have an influence in the region, still it should not be forgotten that the global trend of opting out of any other language in favor English language cannot be underestimated. Even though China is trying extremely hard to be appealing for African students the threat posed by the growing anglosphere is much more visible.

3.2. FRENCH MILITARY INTERVENTIONS

France's old Cold War nickname of being the gendarme of Africa started to be revisited in the recent years. France does not have complete control on most of the continent like the first half of the twentieth century. Still, France kept her relation tight with the newly independent country with cooperation accords and defense pacts. There are also many other levels of cooperation in economic and cultural areas.

During the Cold War France became effectively responsible from defending their part of the African Continent from Soviet intrusion. Ex colonial elite are now responsible for governing their newly independent countries was happy with the arrangement and United States did not complain too much about France's blatant neocolonialist approach toward African countries in the wake of communist uprisings probably sponsored by the Soviet Unions in the continent. The end of the Cold war eliminated France's pretext of

being guardian of the continent against Soviet Union. France no longer claim that she is working for the general western interest after Soviet threat fades.

After the Cold War, the perception of global influence also evolved to a different direction. The financial stability and commercial power became more prominent indicator of global influence rather than military capabilities and dominance over large swathes of territories. This new conjuncture decreased the strategic importance of Africa in the eyes of many westerners. New Pan African public opinion in the continent also harmed the French efforts to hold the cultural dominance. South Africa and Nigeria started to make inroads to influence some African government also British influence on the continent was on the rise. Despite all the challenges, Rwandan genocide was the most decisive event for the French reluctance to continuation of the constant unilateral intervention to the African affairs. The French role in the genocide and the events afterwards is not in the scope of this thesis but it can be said that French exceptionalism in the African affairs is broken in the eyes of African and French public opinion.

Still it is crystal clear that French troops even after the Cold War has always been the central part of any operation in multinational operation in Africa. The difference is France has to act multilaterally with conjunction with African Union, NATO, European Union and United Nations. This does not change the fact that French and allied troops almost always commanded by French officers. For example, in the post-election crisis in Ivory Coast French troops intervened after the United Nations mandate with other nations military personnel. The intervention army was not commanded in a UN structure. They are commanded exclusively by the French army. France decided the objective and France decided to finish to operations when she is satisfied with the conclusion. The same trend continued in the Mali operations and also in the Central African intervention.

3.2.1. Le gendarme de L'Afrique

Countries generally hesitate to intervene militarily. Moreover, countries think twice before intervening in an active conflict that seems like an extension of a long continuing civil war. Besides, it is not easy to sell an intervention to the public if it is not clearly an existential threat. Still, France does not hesitate to intervene in Mali even though it is not clearly an existential threat, it was an active war zone with constantly changing actors and alliances, the conflict with some of the rebels and the central

government was keep going for almost a century and it doesn't seems like it is going to be solved soon.

Most of the African countries are not stable, and yet France choose to intervene some of them. Thus, current French military interventions are largely seen as “War of Choice” more than war of necessity.⁶² We will look further into why France chose to intervene so much to his perceived backyard in the conclusion part.

3.2.1.1. Pré Carré

French sphere of influence in Africa did not diminish geographically after the decolonization, On the exact contrary the network of *Franceafrique* is spread out to other parts of the continent formerly controlled by other powers. The newly independent countries that constitute former Belgian Congo made accords similar with France like the former French colonies, Many Liberian president and ministers are actually had developed close relations with French business elites and accepted French military advisor in their army.

After the introduction of CFA Franc (Franc of the Financial Community of Africa) to peg the currency to the French Franc some of the African countries moved a bit more forward and started to directly use French Franc instead of CFA. Former Portuguese colony of Guinea-Bissau and former Spanish colony of Equatorial Guinea also adopted CFA to better integrate with the region. Former British colony of Ghana is also planning to adopt to the currency by 2020 while the currency's structure and even the name is changing.⁶³

This thesis is not about the ideational basis of French interventionism, it is about how insignificant the discourse. Prestigious French General and Méhariste Claude Le Borgne famously accused the anti-colonialism for obscuring the benefit of the so-called French Empire in Africa. He draws parallels between the situation in Middle East and

⁶² Mechai, H. (2018, March 11). 'Disastrous' Libyan intervention was France's Iraq war, says aid veteran. Retrieved May 22, 2020, from <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/disastrous-libyan-intervention-was-frances-iraq-war-says-aid-veteran>

⁶³ Ross, A. (2019, December 29). Ghana wants to join new West African currency but ditch euro peg (A. Williams & N. Macfie, Eds.). Retrieved July 02, 2020, from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-westafrica-economy/ghana-wants-to-join-new-west-african-currency-but-ditch-euro-peg-idUSKBN1YX0EH>

Balkans. According to him the decline of the two Empires, namely Ottoman Empire and Habsburg Empire caused the inextricable problem in these regions, he wrote an article for the well-known French Military Academic journal *Revue Defense Nationale* to address the issue about not giving enough credit to the “African Empire of France”.⁶⁴

3.2.2. Operation Licorne - Ivory Coast

In 1999, for the first time since their independence a government has been deposed by a coup d'état in Ivory Coast. Even though the deposed leader was hopeful that France will help him regain his control in the country eventually he left to the exile in France. France showed restraint by not interfering right away and chose to continue the regular relations with the new government after initially condemning the coup.

Under the watchful eyes of Ivorian military, a presidential election was held. The coup leader was also a candidate and not so surprisingly campaign got violent the coup leader could only be replaced after an uprising with hundreds of casualties. The leadership change could not quell the violence and ethnic violence continued at the north of the country because a candidate denied candidatureship because of his nationality.

In 2002 civil war broke out previous coup leader killed at the beginning of the unrest. Country effectively divided to two. Meanwhile, warlords from neighboring country and even warlords from Sierra Leone joined the fray. French soldiers from French military base intervened, claiming to protect French citizen they effectively stood between the warring factions. Both sides accused French army for supporting the opposite faction.

Successive French governments skillfully managed to keep French role and dominance in the area intact. Still the crisis also showed that, voluntarily or not France has to seek multilateral collaboration in the region. France did not only use her seat in the UNSC to shield her allies, on the contrary France seeks legitimacy with relevant UNSC mandates to use power. All in all, French authority restored forcefully, and the economic benefits of the Ivory Coast became ready to be reaped by the French companies. An anti-French leader of a country started to be tried by the Court in The Hague and Defense

⁶⁴ Le Borgne, (June 2012) Mali : Vive la Coloniale !. *Revue Défense Nationale* 751. pp. 78-82

relation between Ivory Coast and France became even more entrenched than before. France showed all possible future competitors in the region that she could not hesitate to use force to exert her dominance. Meanwhile, the military activism of France in Ivory Coast and Libya simultaneously draw criticism from Russia and China.

3.2.3. Operation Harmattan - Libyan Intervention

France militarily intervened several times against the military expansionism of Libya's Gaddafi during the Cold War. Libya downed a French passenger plane over Niger in 1989, Both countries were inimical to each other for almost forty years filled with all kind of military and diplomatic operations against each other short of being in active war. Still everything changes after Libyan leader decided to end his country's long isolation. After accepting the responsibility and paying a large sum of compensation money consisting of billions of dollars for all victims of terrorist attacks by Libyan Intelligence Libyan government managed to achieve a rapprochement with western governments.

Libya with her enormous petroleum reserves on top of her close proximity to European market becomes a great alternative. With her untapped potential, Libya was a great candidate for large western investments. Then again, Libya had a huge sovereign fund and Libyan leader did not shy to show his country's wealth. Gaddafi started a huge shopping spree in France. Libya purchased order of 21 Airbus planes and a nuclear power plant. Libya also showed intentions to buy all kind of military equipment for her army. The political honeymoon between France and Libya became more apparent by Libyan leader's state visit to Paris in the last month of 2007. The Libyan leader lavishly honored in Paris. His French hosts even pitched his Bedouin tent in the garden of the Paris mansion.

Less than 4 years after this historical visit, in 2011, French bomber jets could not even wait for a NATO decision to start bombing Libyan targets. France became the first country to bomb Libya to enforce a no-fly zone against Libyan air force. Libyan leader eventually captured and killed by the rebels in the same year after an airstrike to his convoy.

French government was quick to label her military involvement and lead role as a "humanitarian intervention". This radical change in the foreign policy is hard to

understand. The same government has been ruling France during both events. If we overlook domestic political reasons in accordance with the classical realist approach, there were not so many reasons for France to intervene in Libya after cozying up with Libyan leader for years.

After the cancellation of arm embargo to Libya France made a half billion dollars' worth of arms sale to Libya. It was more than any other country. French oil company Total is already involved and competing with Italian ENI. France had reason to protect her entrenched position by protecting the Libyan leader. Still France choose to make a "humanitarian intervention". We will discuss the possible reasons after briefly checking the upcoming events in the Libyan Civil War. France kept the image of acting in a multilateral framework until Libyan Civil War spiraled out of control.

3.2.3.1. Libyan Civil War

After the so-called humanitarian intervention Libya eventually engulfed in an embroiled Civil War. Even some jihadist and Salafist element joined either side of the conflict while he notorious Islamic State managed to have a beach head in the Libyan territories. France suddenly realized that having a strongman controlling an unruly population is better than dealing with plethora of violent terrorist organization in the Mediterranean Basin. France eventually left all the display of acting in a multilateral framework. While effectively blocking every possible joint European action against the rising threat, France also straight out assisted one side of the conflict that were fighting against the government recognized as the legitimate by the United Nations.

The French interest about the Libyan affairs could be traced back to the Libya Chad War, thus the general tendency of protecting the French African influence, still France continued to be involved to the Libyan Civil War to just shore up her preferred side. In this context France is not only trying to block other possible offshore influencers (Italy, Turkey) to have a beach head in Africa, France is also trying to seize the opportunity to increase her sphere of influence in the region. This is perfectly compatible with offensive realist theory.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Mearsheimer, J. J. (2001). *The tragedy of great power politics*. WW Norton & Company. p. 35.

It does seem inconsistent that French act ostensibly dissonant comparing to her previous acts during international crisis. France chose to act unilaterally or multilaterally in the exact same conflict with the exact same government without hesitating. France also seemingly change her diplomatic postures several times ranging from coherent and accommodating to unilaterally interventionist even to jingoist. French government did not even hesitate to antagonize her formal treaty allies like Italy and United Kingdom⁶⁶ and defy UN arms embargo.⁶⁷ After all demonstrations of commitment to the multilateral solutions France conversely blocked all European Union's attempts to create a unified stance against the crisis.⁶⁸

With this operation, France showed with utmost certainty that she will try to keep her prominent position in the region. It can be speculated that even if she must rush to start an operation only for the sake of starting a military intervention and taking a leading role in her perceived back yard before her transatlantic partners. She proved she can take that decision.

3.2.4. Operation Serval - Mali

Even before the Operation Serval officially started there are already a multinational deployment approved by the UNSC. The deployment of African forces under the command of Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) becomes a reality thanks to the French diplomats actively seeking a multilateral solution to the problems in the Sahel. It was compatible with the presidential campaign of Francois Hollande before he took the office in 2012. In the presidential campaign of prominent candidates before the election, Hollande's campaign was much more pacifist against the Sarkozy's campaign with the slogan "Strong France". So, it is naturally surprising for the observers when France started a full-scale intervention to the Mali conflict to stop rebels from

⁶⁶ Davidson, J. W. (2013). France, Britain and the intervention in Libya: an integrated analysis. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 26(2), 310–329. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2013.784573>

⁶⁷ Taylor, P. (2019, April 17). France's double game in Libya. *POLITICO*. <https://www.politico.eu/article/frances-double-game-in-libya-nato-un-khalifa-haftar/>.

⁶⁸ Baczynska, G., & Guarascio, F. (2019, April 10). France blocks EU call to stop Haftar's offensive in Libya. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-eu-tajani/france-blocks-eu-call-to-stop-haftars-offensive-in-libya-idUSKCN1RM1DO>.

overrunning the capital of Mali after only two months earlier he promised to his constituents that he will not intervene militarily in Mali.⁶⁹

The French intervention was strictly unilateral and did not seek a façade of an umbrella from ECOWAS or UN. After promising to radically diminish the military presence in Africa France deployed more than four thousand in Mali alone. France again did not hesitate or even wait for a multinational intervention, even now at 2020 still vast swathes of territory in Mali is controlled by several different rebel groups, such as Al Qaeda affiliated Islamist militants (Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin, Ansar Dine, AQIM etc.), Islamic State related Islamist groups (Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, Boko Haram, Ansaru etc.), anti-sharia militant groups (Ganda Iso), Tuareg Nationalist rebels (MNLA), Tuareg Islamist rebels (Islamic Movement of Azawad), Anti Tuareg Arab rebels, Tuareg rebels that only seeks autonomy rather than independence (Front for the Liberation of the Azawad) and various other indigenous militant groups (Songhay, Fula) that even trying to write all of them with their constantly changing relations require hundreds of pages with many contradicting views.

Even though ECOWAS and European Union with many other states were quick to announce their support for the French operations, it did not change the fact that France decided alone to intervene to a very complicated conflict. France took the initiative to deploy forces in the theatre to be able to dominate the overall political landscape after and during the conflict. During the crisis, coup d'état happened and even after publicly condemning the coup leaders with the rest of the world France did not wait to intervene on behalf of the central government that were a junta at the time. So, it is clear by every aspect that there are no other reasons for French intervention than the cold political calculation which is quite compatible with the offensive realist theory.

The French intervention in the Mali was not an exception on the term of President Hollande. France bolstered her military presence in the Africa by intervening in Central Africa Republic at the same year.

⁶⁹ Chafer, T. (2016). France in Mali: Towards a new Africa strategy? *International Journal of Francophone Studies*, 19(2), 119–141. https://doi.org/10.1386/ijfs.19.2.119_1

3.2.5. Operation Sangaris – Central African Republic

Operation Serval in Mali and Operation Sangaris are fundamentally different even though they are launched almost simultaneously. The conflict in Mali and the conflict in Central Africa bare some resemblance though. There are ethnoreligious elements in both conflicts, the difference is in the numbers. French army deployment in the both operations are minimal, still the restive area in Mali is much more sparsely populated then Central Africa.

France was able to achieve much more focused objective in this conflict. France was able to prevent yet another genocide like the Rwanda and French army with the help of African and European deployment was able to catalyze the disarmament program in the Area. France could not possibly hope to control such a large area with a heavily armed population, so it is perceived as a relative success considering the minimal military deployment.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Hémez, R. (2016). Operation Sangaris A Case Study in Limited Military Intervention. *MILITARY REVIEW*, 96(6), 72–80.

4. CRITICISM AND FURTHER STATISTICS

It is a great oversimplification to reduce French foreign policy decision making to counter other powers in Africa. It is also counterproductive in the sense of Realist International relations theory to focus on a certain country.

4.1. REVERSE CORRELATION WITH CHINESE FINANCIAL INVESTMENT AND FRENCH MILITARY INVOLVEMENT

There is a stark contrast between Chinese involvement and the French military interventions in Africa. In almost every conflict area studied in this thesis there is a reverse magnetic relationship between Chinese investment and the French army. Whenever the French army involve in an area the Chinese investment stalls and whenever the French army left Chinese involvement returns immediately stronger than before. In this sense it could be said that French politicians are not particularly concerned about a financial return for their military strategies in the area. Maybe, the French foreign policy decision makers are overly focused on protecting the existing arrangements.

Most recently in 2019 in a state visit to Djibouti French President Macron diplomatically warned China and presumably some African countries sympathetic to the Chinese encroachment in the area by stating:

” China is a great world power and has expanded its presence in many countries, especially in Africa, in recent years ... But what can look good in the short term ... can often end up being bad over the medium to long term ...

I wouldn't want a new generation of international investments to encroach on our historical partners' sovereignty or weaken their economies,”⁷¹

In this part I will try to show the direct competition between China and France in the region using the statements from government official and news agencies from both

⁷¹ Irish, J. (2019, March 12). Macron warns of Chinese risk to African sovereignty. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-djibouti-france/macron-warns-of-chinese-risk-to-african-sovereignty-idUSKBN1QS2QP>.

side of the competition. Again, like in the previous part I will focus on four countries: Libya, Ivory Coast, Mali and Central African Republic for the sake of consistency.

4.1.1. Ivory Coast

The interesting thing about the Operation Licorne and the Chinese investment in Ivory Coast is that Chinese investment happened when there are no operations and continues only after the French troops withdrawn from the country. The Chinese investment in West Africa in general and investment in Ivory Coast differs in the timetable. Ivory Coast missed the initial Chinese investment spree in the 2011 while Operation Licorne was underway and the Ivorian government had more important tasks to do in the middle of a civil war. Right after the French withdrawal Chinese investment quadrupled almost instantly in the country.⁷²

Between 1995 and 2017 French export to the country almost doubled despite 2 brutal civil war Ivory Coast endured. Still, China surpassed France as a lead exporter by a large margin after the leap in the 2012.⁷³ Even so France's strong connection with the country like any other one is secure. The telecom industry and gasoline distribution are almost completely dominated by the French companies, namely Orange and Total respectively. The unspoken monopoly of the French has been also noted repetitively in Chinese media outlets.⁷⁴

4.1.2. Libya

China condemned the NATO interventions against the Gaddafi regime. Still after the demise of Gaddafi and his regime, China tried to develop a much more businesslike approach to the new government. There were already more than 20 billion dollars' worth of government contracts between Libya and Chinese firm and China made sure to protect

⁷² China's investment in West Africa takes on France in former colonies. South China Morning Post. (2018, July 18). <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2155804/chinas-investment-west-africa-challenges-france>.

⁷³ Che, A. M. (2019, August 7). China's Rise in the African Franc Zone and France's Containment Policy. E. <https://www.e-ir.info/2019/08/07/chinas-rise-in-the-african-franc-zone-and-frances-containment-policy/>.

⁷⁴ Qing, Z. (2019, March 11). China will not relive France's colonialism in Africa. Global Times. <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1168817.shtml>.

her investment with cozying up the government after the NATO involvement in the area are diminished.

In the current conflict China and France are supporting different sides. While China is supporting the UN recognized Government of National Accord, French government supports the House of Representative aligned Libyan National Army led by General Haftar. While France is supporting the Libyan Field Marshall with clandestine operations⁷⁵ in accordance with French recent efforts to develop alliances with dictators with authoritarian tendencies in Africa and Sahel,⁷⁶ the real impact of French contribution is political. French government hosted a summit for both leaders of the conflicts and devise a power sharing agreement between the UN recognized government and a self-proclaimed leader.⁷⁷

Chinese administration is not inclined to involve into this conflict as much as other regional powers in the regions understandably. There are not too much at stakes for China in this conflict. Still, it is a striking fact that China is promoting a multinational solution while supporting a UN recognized government against a dictatorial leader openly supported by France.⁷⁸

4.1.3. Mali

Chinese aid and investment to Mali has a long history. During the decolonization period, Chinese state aid started to pour to Africa. At first China prefer to aid government closer to the socialist ideals China claims to pursuit and Mali was one of those country. Still Chinese goals for investing in Africa is larger than simply supporting the regimes it felt kinship with it.⁷⁹ China helped Mali built several sugar complexes with plantations and refineries, leather factories and textile mills. The investments largely administrated

⁷⁵ BBC. (2016, July 20). Libya attack: French soldiers die in helicopter crash. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-36843186>.

⁷⁶ Lebovich, A. (2020, January 10). "More coordination" won't fix the Sahel. ECFR. https://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_more_coordination_wont_fix_the_sahel.

⁷⁷ Badi, E. (2020, April 21). Russia Isn't the Only One Getting Its Hands Dirty in Libya. Foreign Policy. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/04/21/libyan-civil-war-france-uae-khalifa-haftar/>.

⁷⁸ Ramani, S. (2019, June 18). Where Does China Stand on the Libya Conflict? – The Diplomat. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/06/where-does-china-stand-on-the-libya-conflict/>.

⁷⁹ Bräutigam, D. (2011). The dragon's gift: the real story of China in Africa. In *The dragon's gift: the real story of China in Africa* (pp. 31–32). essay, Oxford University Press.

by Chinese directors. Mali's government was very happy with the arrangements and even asked for more Chinese administrative personnel from China to direct other factories that has been built without the Chinese aid. Mali's industrial output outgrows the expectation in this era.⁸⁰

Prior to the French operations in Mali there were several Chinese aids to Mali in the form of infrastructural aid and health aid. China build a bridge and a hospital in Bamako. In addition to the hospital building Chinese doctors treated inhabitants of Mali free of charge for a long period of time due to the Malaria epidemic in the country.⁸¹ Then president Amadou Toumany Toure expressed his feelings toward China with saying "*felt embarrassed when [he] met your president hu Jintao, because he gave us everything we wanted, but we had nothing to give him back*".⁸²

Chinese aid to the country slowed down after 2011. Chinese economic relationship with Mali has been overshadowed by the more resource rich African states.⁸³ Still it is important to note that Mali is the first country in Africa, China commit actual combat troops rather than supporting the UN Peace Corps with non-combat personnel under the auspice of the UN Peace Keeping forces. It can be argued that it was a rather open message against French unilateralism in the prior intervention. With as large as 400 personnel in the peace keeping force, China tried to have a greater role in the operation.⁸⁴

4.1.4. Central African Republic

The relationship between Central African Republic and France has been murky since the republic's conception. During the presidency of the first president of the republic CAR severed its ties with Taiwan and switched recognition to the People Republic of China. China rewarded the recognition with financial aids and technical expertise in many areas desperately needed by the CAR. Just a year later the first president of the republic

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Barton, M. B., & Men, J. (Eds.). (2011). *China and the European Union in Africa: partners or competitors?*. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Zan, S. Z. D. (2015). Economic Impact of China's Investments in Mali's Construction Sector on Mali. *Journal of International Relations and Foreign Policy*, 3(2). <https://doi.org/10.15640/jirfp.v3n2a3>

⁸⁴ Sun, Y., & Rettig, M. (2016, July 29). Mali after the Election: Priorities of China and the U.S. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2013/07/26/mali-after-the-election-priorities-of-china-and-the-u-s/>.

toppled by his cousin. The new president was a French army captain and a companion of arms of then French president of France Charles de Gaulle during the second world war and the subsequent First Indochina war. The new president also called French President de Gaulle as his real father.^{85 86}

The relationship between the then putschist, now president of the republic and France went smoothly even after he declared himself Emperor and his republic as an Empire. One of the first decision of the coup plotter is to reverse the decision of the recognition of PRC. After briefly converting to Islam to help finding financial help from Libyan leader Gaddafi. The newly self-recognized Emperor decided to visit China and switch recognition to PRC to be able to find economic and diplomatic partners.⁸⁷ The Emperor toppled swiftly with a French paratroopers' battalion storming his palace a couple of years later.

Of course, it is not fair to claim all the development in a landlocked country in Africa is an extension of some other countries foreign policies. It would be more understandable if the countries are two superpowers competing for world dominance, but the synchronization is still quite remarkable in this context.

⁸⁵ Taylor, I. (2010). *The International Relations of Sub-Saharan Africa*. United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Academic.

⁸⁶ Faes Géraldine, & Smith, S. (2000). Bokassa: un empereur français. In *Bokassa: un empereur français* (pp. 24–25). essay, Calmann-Lévy.

⁸⁷ The New York Times. (1976, December 5). *In Central Africa the Sun Sets on a Republic and Comes Up on an Empire*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/1976/12/05/archives/in-central-africa-the-sun-sets-on-a-republic-and-comes-up-on-an.html>.

5. CONCLUSION

There are many articles claiming French behaviors in Africa is an obvious example of neo imperialist international relation. After examining the examples, it is becoming harder for me to make the distinction between neo imperialism and *classical* imperialism. French decision makers devoid of any other interests act whenever there is a problem disturbing the relative peace in the region. There is no real ideological indicator of interventions, French army disarm anti-Islamic militia in Central African Republic (anti-balakas) while fighting against Islamic militias (AQIM) and secular nationalist separatists (MNLA) in Mali at the same time. French army backed coup leaders and democratically elected officials in the same country whenever they seem plausible for the overall French agenda, namely keeping the France Africa relations intact and safe keeping the overall post-colonial structure.

French governments used French military as a political tool in Africa. After losing to her position as a primary foreign direct investor a long time ago to China, France doubled down on her military operations in the regions. French constant army presence in the region cannot be diminished even though successive governments pledged to decrease it before every election.

France is used to act unilaterally in the context of African conflicts. This does not mean that France is not open to cooperation. France regularly cooperates with African states and made security arrangements that would benefits African states as much as France. France is also enthusiastic to cooperate with European partners. France suggests and push for European involvement in the Area whenever possible. Still it is clear that France always keeps the overall command of peace keeping forces and does not show too much enthusiasm of other powers involvement in the area.

It would be premature to argue that there is a Monroe Doctrine equivalent of French doctrine in the so called *Francafrique*. But it does seem much more plausible than any other argument for French decision making in the context of interstate and regional African conflicts.

Overall, it is premature to claim every single event in the African theatre are related to the competition between France and China. Still, there is a non-negligible rivalry between two states affecting the political situation in Africa. In this sense this thesis reached its primary goal of achieving to simplify a staggeringly complicated foreign policy decision like a military intervention in multiple countries to a simple and understandable great power competition.

Based on the information available it is not easy to argue the reason behind the French reengagement is competition between United States and China. Not because France is not aware its capabilities, because there are clear example in Libya and Ivory Coast that France even though happy to cooperate other states if their interest are aligned with France and if they are accepting the French primacy in her perceived sphere of influence. So, in this context it is much more understandable to presume in the eyes of French foreign policy decision makers France is at least on par with any other superpower if not superior to the others in the African theater operation. Thus, if we oversimplify it, the reason behind the France reengagement is not United States works in Africa.

On the other hand, the second hypothesis of explaining French decision making with the hegemonic behavior is very sound. It was explained with examples over and over in every chosen country that France foreign policy decision making does not connected with any ideological or humanitarian principles. It cannot be ignored that there are some murky personnel relationships between African leaders and French foreign policy establishment that can be effective in the decision-making process. Still, the existence of the intricate relationships between these individuals also shows the French policy establishment is closely related to the African elites in a hegemonic manner.

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