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Seattle University

The End of *Francafrique*?
French Economic and Political Strategies in Cote d'Ivoire
and their Local Responses

A thesis Submitted to
The Faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences
In Candidacy for the Degree of
Departmental Honors in International Studies

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Abstract

This paper takes a critical look at the *Francafrique,* the relationship between France and its former colonies. Using a dependency theory approach, it will explain why the *Francafrique* as it stands today is not a partnership between equals but rather an unbalanced agreement that mostly benefits France, multinational corporations, and the ruling elites of the countries it operates in. This paper will show how dependency theory helps explain the way *Francafrique* functions and how it impacts the economic growth of France's former colonies, in order to prove that as it stands, the relationship between France and Côte d'Ivoire is detrimental to the economic autonomy and development of Côte d'Ivoire. This will be done within the historical, political and economic contexts of the relationship between France and Cote d'Ivoire over the course of three French and Ivorian presidencies (1995-2017).

Keywords

Cote d'Ivoire, France, France's African policy, Francafrique, Dependency Theory

Terms:

BCEAO: *Banque Centrale des Etats d'Afrique de l'Ouest* [Central Bank of West African States]

CFA: Communauté Financière Africaine [African Financial Community]

ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States

Francafrique: term used to describe the unequal relationship between France and its former colonies in West Africa

WAEMU: West African Economic and Monetary Union

Introduction

The close relationship France maintains with its former colonies in West Africa has its roots in the decolonization negotiations that took place in the 1960s and 1970s. Upon establishing their independence, former French West African colonies (with the exception of Guinea Conakry) chose to keep close ties with France, in the hopes of avoiding conflict and benefiting from a smoother transition to political and economic autonomy. For France, maintaining relations with its former colonies meant keeping their influence over territories that offered access to oil, raw commodities and untapped consumer markets. Despite his opposition to colonial rule, former President Charles de Gaulle recognized the benefits that extensive ties with Africa presented to France (Chafer, 2006). Under his presidency, he established an 'Africa cell' at the Elysee Palace, a special department separate from the French Foreign ministry, where advisors decided African political and economic policies. Among other agreements, the former colonies agreed to keep the franc CFA (African Financial Community), a currency that ties the countries' monetary policies to France. Former Ivorian president Felix Houphouet-Boigny first used the term '*Francafrique'* to designate the idyllic image of cooperation and mutually beneficial partnership that it was to embody. However, over the years, the term has evolved to designate the neo-colonial character of those relations. The relationship between France and Côte d'Ivoire[1] is particularly interesting because of the uniquely close ties between Houphouet-Boigny and French officials, even after independence. Having experienced greater economic growth than its counterparts in the 1970s and 1980s, Cote d'Ivoire has been hailed by mainstream economists as the shining example of the amicable *Francafrique* model (Bovcon, 2013).

Because of the relative economic stability and growth that Côte d'Ivoire has experienced since its independence, this paper will focus on its relationship with France, and analyze its economic impact over the course of three French and Ivorian presidencies (1995-2017). First, I will go over the history of Franco-Ivorian relations since the independence in 1960. I will then explain France's role in shaping the current political climate in Côte d'Ivoire, and how it affects

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[1] Côte d'Ivoire was formerly known as Ivory Coast, but the country officially changed its name in 1986.

its economic growth. Finally, I will look at the monetary and financial agreement and its implication for Cote d'Ivoire's ability to control its economic policies.

Developmental theories: what factors drive economic development?

Economists have long pondered the issue of development—improvement of the social, economic and political well-being of people—in the Global South. In the first half of the 20th century, modernization theory was the model adopted by mainstream economists to explain the process of development. In this context, modernization means the transition from a traditional or 'pre-modern' state to a modern one. Inspired by the work of German sociologist Max Weber, who defined a modernized society as one whose values are based on rationality, bureaucratic domination and world mastery (Marsh, 2014), modernization theory implies that countries' development process is contingent on the evolution of their internal institutions from traditional to modern ones. This theory is rooted in the empirical relationship between a country's GDP per capita and the nature of its internal institutions. In fact, proponents of modernization theory found that (1) as a country's level of modernization increases, certain aspects of its social, political, cultural and economic institutions change, (2) there is a certain degree of homogeneity among the institutions of countries that have successfully completed the process of modernization. Thus, in order for developing countries to reach modernization, their internal institutions must change (Marsh, 2014). Within the context of this research, it is important to note that this theory is rooted in European colonial aspirations. In fact, developing nations are constructed as having 'traditional' societies; without the resources to develop without the guidance or domination of a Western country. Several other theoretical frameworks such as post-colonialism and post-structuralism look at how the distorted representations of non-Western countries have influenced international relations.

Based on these assumptions, several economists such as Walt Rostow (1960) have proposed a concrete 5-stage process through which traditional societies (based on subsistence agriculture) become modern ones (based on high consumption) by going through several steps in their economic model. This evolutionary outlook is built upon in more recent works by Newson and Richerson (2009), who developed the 'kin hypothesis'. According to this theory, cultural aspects of societies also ascribe to the process of evolution from pre-modern to modern. For Newson and Richerson (2009), economic development fundamentally changes the priorities of individuals, who move their focus from kin related issues (marriage, family and community) to non-kin (professional network, education, individual success).

Starting in the mid-20th century, modernization theory has faced many criticisms as scholars point out its exclusive focus on the internal barriers to modernization that developing countries face. While that may be a relevant arena of focus when studying the developmental process of already modernized countries, the analysis of development in countries of the Global South cannot be complete without considering the major external forces at play, including former colonial powers. These external influences include foreign governments–which was not uncommon, especially in the context of the Cold War–and multinational firms that sought to control resources in developing countries. In light of these realities unique to the situation of developing nations, studies on economic growth have evolved from modernization theory to alternative approaches to development, one of which is dependency theory (Namkoong, 1999).

Dependency theory argues that, first, there needs to be an emphasis on internal and external factors, as well as the relationship between the two. This means that the blame for the failure of development policies should not fall solely on the shoulders of the political leaders of the country, but also on the international forces that apply pressure for their own benefit as well. That is especially true in developing countries where the influence of foreign interests is considerable. Second, multinational actors, social classes and foreign states need to be considered as additional units of analysis. Dependency theorists argue that in addition to the state/market dichotomy that is mostly present in liberal analyses of economic policy actors, multinational corporations, economic and political elites, and foreign states play a role in the state of the economy through their various spheres of influence. In the *Françafrique,* for instance, the monetary union (CFA) that is backed and overseen by France is seen by dependency theorists as a sign of external influence on countries' economic policies. Lastly, while proponents of modernization theory believe that today's developing countries should follow the same path as earlier developed countries, dependency theorists argue that the conditions under which the latter underwent their developmental process are no longer existent (Namkoong, 1999).

Another major difference to note between dependency and modernization theory is their ideological base. Dependency theory views international relations from a structuralist perspective. Structuralism has many overlaps with dependency theory. Scholars of this school of thought (Prebisch, 1960; Singer, 1949; Furtado, 1964) look at the structural impediments to development in developing countries and argue that state intervention and the implementation of Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) is the best way to modernization. Dependency theory takes this a step further by considering the different factors and actors that stand in the way of ISI and self-sustaining growth in developing countries. It upholds that there is an unequal exchange between a core (earlier developed countries) and a periphery (developing countries), while modernization theory grounds itself in a liberal perspective, which underlines a virtuous triangle in which the diffusion of democracy, universal institutions and economic policies lead to peace and prosperity for all nations. For dependency theorists, this viewpoint undermines the unequal footing on which countries stand when negotiating economic and trade policies on the international sphere. Not taking into account this reality means overlooking what is in their view the main barrier for modernization in developing countries.

Dependency theory itself has evolved through different stages in which scholars grappled with the complex relationship between 'core' and 'periphery' countries. In dependency theory, the 'core' refers to countries with developed and independent economies that often lead in the international decision making process, whereas countries in the 'periphery' are mostly reactionary to the formers' policies and are dependent on them for political and economic growth. Early studies posit that one major aspect of dependency is the lack of control peripheral countries have over their economy. Several factors explain this: first. peripheral countries often depend on either agriculture/livestock production or the export of raw materials, both of which are subject to forces out of their control—agriculture and livestock depend on natural conditions and raw material exports depend on external demand—which often leads to high fluctuations in market price. Second, the current trend of foreign direct investments in peripheral countries mean that "an increasing portion of the ownership and control of national resources and activities are turned over to foreign firms" (Namkoong, 1999, p.131) leaving peripheral countries no room to develop their own industries. Finally, in the specific case of Francophone Africa, countries have limited control over their monetary policies since they belong to a common financial community (CFA) that controls their exchange rates as well as their reserves (Canac and Garcia-Contreras, 2011). This lack of control limits countries like Côte d'Ivoire's ability to enact policies that would encourage diversification, as opposed to the unsustainable practice of catering to external demand through the production of cash crops.

France and West Africa: interdependence or dependency?

In liberal thought, the idea of interdependence is a positive attribute of an international economic and political system. Early liberals such as Immanuel Kant have discussed the merits of states cooperating to create peace and security. From an economic perspective, David Ricardo has demonstrated how states can benefit from each other through specialization in their comparative advantages; all nations are better off economically when they specialize in the production of the good they can most efficiently make and trade with other nations. The idea of interdependence became more prominent after the establishment of the post-WWII international economic and political system that prevails today. It emphasizes on the benefits of cooperation between states as a way to create mutually assured peace and prosperity among nations. International institutions such as the IMF, World Bank and the UN were created as oversight agencies that would ensure economic, social and political stability in member states.

In the case of developing nations, international institutions have repeatedly made the case that the main impediment to their development was the ineffective protectionist policies put in place by their governments. In fact, from a liberal perspective, the market automatically tends towards 'efficient' outcomes, meaning that every resource is optimally allocated in order to serve individual, national and international interests. If this assumption is held to be true, then inefficient outcomes emanate from non-market influences, namely internal, political entities that use the state to serve their own personal benefits. In the case of African economies, the problem is often defined in terms of corrupt elites and 'failed states', or the incapacity of states to let the market operate in an efficient way, without looking at the external pressures that contribute to their economic and political problems. The solution proposed by these international institutions consists of accepting Structural Adjustments Plans (SAPs) that would allow international market forces to shape domestic prices, wages and resource allocation patterns with little to no intervention by states (Bienefeld, 1983). However, SAPs have been criticized for making developing countries more vulnerable by forcing states to diminish support for their national production and open their borders to foreign supply and demand. As states cut their social spending, their local agricultural and industrial sectors stop growing and they are forced to rely on products from better established economic powers such as Europe, the United States or China.

Thus, similar to modernization theory, this outlook fails to account for the various international actors that support and have been supporting policies that are detrimental to the developing countries' growth over the years. First, the liberal perspective erroneously assumes that the market outcomes are (1) always efficient and (2) simultaneously benefit both individual, national and international interests. In contrast, dependency theory argues that unregulated and open markets can be detrimental to emerging economies that do not always have the capacity to compete at an international level. Without a minimum of protection from the states, infant industries are quickly overwhelmed by outside competition and unable to develop. National economies are forced in the position of providing raw, export-oriented commodities while importing necessities such as food (Bienefeld, 1988). For most of these countries, this is only a continuation of the plantation colony model they were forced to adapt to during colonial times. However, as commodity prices fall, so do their foreign reserves and their ability to import products necessary for their populations, thus resulting in a widespread crisis. In addition, dependency theory rejects the notion that the 'efficiency' of the markets provide the same benefits for every actor involved, emphasizing instead that the interests of the states might differ from those of individuals or even international actors.

In his study of African economies from a dependency theory lens, Bienefeld (1988) argues that the SAPs recommended by the World Bank actually go against the benefit of African countries because they prevent them from regulating their economies to prevent the deterioration of their foreign reserves, social welfare programs and infrastructures. He argues that even the most successful NIC (New Industrialized Countries) 'miracle' economies such as Taiwan and South Korea were heavily involved in managing their growth through state-owned financial institutions, discretionary credit subsidies and control of investments, tariffs and non-tariff barriers (Bienefeld, 1998, p. 71). Dependency theory allows us to look beyond the state/market dichotomy, beyond the assumption of an auto-regulating markets and makes us consider different actors (state, non-state) and layers of analyses (national and foreign) that play a role in shaping the economy of developing countries.

Despite the efforts of multiple French presidents to frame it as a mutually beneficial partnership between equals (LeGouriellec, 2011), the relationship between France and Cote d'Ivoire displays symptoms of dependency as opposed to interdependence. Dos Santos (1999), a Brazilian political scientist, defined dependency as the situation in which periphery countries find themselves in:

> A situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected. The relation of inter-

> dependency between two or more economies, and between these and world trade, assumes the form of dependency when some countries (the dominant ones) can expand and can be self-sustaining, while other countries (the dependent ones) can do this only as a reflection of that expansion, which can have either a positive or a negative effect on their immediate development.

The following analysis will demonstrate that the dynamic between France and Cote d'Ivoire show the same characteristics of one country being overly dependent on the other, both at the political and economic levels. While there have been studies such as Bienefeld (1988), Canas & Garcias (2011) that have done a cross-country analysis in Africa using a dependency theory lens, there are virtually no country specific studies in Francophone West Africa that underline the effects of a dependency relationship in practice. The case of Côte d'Ivoire is of particular interest because, as one of the strongest economies in the CFA union, it has been heralded by mainstream development theorists as proof that liberal policies and collaboration with France is of positive impact on its former colonies. However, this paper argues and shows that despite its relative economic stability, Côte d'Ivoire does exhibit traits of dependency in its relationship with France, which prevents it from achieving economic independence and sustainable development.

French Presence in Cote d'Ivoire: A Brief History

In order to truly understand the nature of the *Francafrique*, it is important to ground any study on the matter in the historical, colonial roots of the French presence in West Africa. The *Francafrique* is an evolution of the previous colonial rule to a more concealed, purportedly mutually beneficial relationship.

The presence of France in Cote d'Ivoire dates back to the mid 19th century, a few years before the Berlin Conference formally assigned African territories to different European powers. Once they succeeded in crushing resistance from local tribes and kingdoms, the French established a system of direct colonial rule by appointing regional governors and administrators in different protectorates. This enabled them to institute a head tax as well as a system of forced labor that enabled them to profit off of the various raw commodities the country was able to produce (Handloff, 1991). Through this system, French plantation owners benefited from free labor and thus accumulated profits while the Ivorian population remained impoverished. In order to sustain this dynamic and crush potential uprising, the French allowed the creation of an elite, educated class of Ivoirians that were virtually allowed the same rules as French citizens (Handloff, 1991).

Through the use of assimilation policies, officials enforced the concept of French superiority over other institutions, laws and customs. Under assimilation, a different set of laws governed French citizens (colonizers) and subjects (colonized). For subjects, the only way to gain access to rights enjoyed by citizens was to gradually strip themselves from their native culture, language and traditions. Through the use of a divide-and-rule strategy, the French only allowed access to these rights to a minority of Ivoirians that were educated in the French tradition. This small elite believed that, through Western education, they would be able to achieve equality with their French peers and would eventually be granted independence, a hope that quickly turned to disillusion after WWII (Handloff, 1991). Nevertheless, the notion that France, as a more advanced economic and political power, would benefit Côte d'Ivoire's economy is still prevalent in older Ivoirian generations who grew up under French rule.

The aftermath of WWII brought about several factors that impacted popular sentiment towards France in Côte d'Ivoire. First, the need to rebuilt a war-torn France led to the increase of tariffs and administrative expropriation of labor, further upsetting the Ivoirian working class (Lawler, 1990). Second, the accounts of returned Ivorian soldiers that were drafted in the war introduced a loss of confidence in the power and security of the French state. Furthermore, the introduction of profit crops and better agricultural practices after WWII led to the emergence of a wealthy class of African farmers, competing with the well-established French crop farmers

(Handloff, 1991). Increasingly aware of the unfair market rules that privileged European farmers, local farmers created an African Agricultural Union (Syndicat Agricole Africain—SAA), led by future president Felix Houphouet-Boigny. Later renamed the Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI) in 1946, the SAA began explicitly voicing its opposition to the French authorities and as a result, was met with violent repression (Handloff, 1991). Realizing the fate that awaited the party if it continued protesting French presence, Houphouet-Boigny decided to form an alliance with the administration, thus successfully acquiring significant political and economic power as chair of the PDCI.

France and Côte d'Ivoire: A Literature Review

The relationship between France and Cote d'Ivoire is peculiar in that, contrary to other formerly French colonies such as Guinea or Algeria, the two have maintained close ties on political and economic levels. In fact, the predominantly non-violent transition process from colony to independent nations in most of West Africa have allowed for the formation of a strong relationship even after colonial ties were severed (Chafer, 2006). When it comes to analyzing this relationship, scholars of Franco-African relations disagree on the nature of the consequences a continued relationship with France has had on West African economies.

Among some scholars, France's prolonged presence in Francophone Africa has been criticized as paternalistic and detrimental to the region's autonomy. In her study of Franco-African relations during former French President Sarkozy's presidency, Legouriellec (2011) provides an analysis of his public position on African affairs in contrast with concrete policy changes during the same period. She finds that in his address to African nations, Sarkozy had often promised the end of the hegemonic influence of France on African politics and economy, but his efforts remained symbolic—such as abolishing the African unit of the presidential Elysee Palace. In fact, his cabinet remained filled with officials intent on maintaining the status quo relationship between the two until the end of his tenure (Legouriellec, 2011). Similarly, military intervention remains an important facet of France's presence in the region, which some scholars argue is a way of preserving its political influence in the region. Wyss (2013) argues that in continuation of its '*Francafrique'* agenda, France's intervention in the 2010-2011 conflict in Cote d'Ivoire was meant to reinstate its status as a hegemon by supporting then-presidential candidate Allassane Ouattara, a strong France ally. France has been accused of being selective in its interference, only using force wherever their political and economic influence seems to be in jeopardy. In Cote d'Ivoire, its intervention during the 2010-2011 was motivated by the fact that power was at the time in the hands of an outspoken anti-France leader, Laurent Gbagbo (Wyss, 2013). Wyss argues that to this day, France has successful used a hybrid policy strategy in which they utilized both multilateral and unilateral interventions in West Africa, while at the same time maintaining their international legitimacy in doing so. This is significant because in the eyes of the international community, France has been intervening only to uphold international values such as democracy and human rights and remains an impartial, benevolent actor in the region, while the reality is more nuanced (Wyss, 2013).

From an economic perspective, Canac and Garcia-Contreras (2013) take a closer look at the financial community (CFA) to which most of France's former colonies belong. While conceding that the CFA offers benefits to both France (access to low-cost raw materials and growing consumer markets) and its former colonies (access to French treasury and stable monetary policy), Canac and Garcia-Contreras point out that the CFA is mainly a way for France to retain its hegemony in the region. This claim is supported by the fact that France has also extended EPA agreements with resources rich non-CFA countries such as Nigeria and Angola (Canac and Garcia-Contreras, 2013). This is detrimental to CFA nations because it keeps them in a situation of dependency where they only have access to one potential economic partner.

On the other hand, other scholars argue that the relationship between France and its former colonies represents a win-win situation where France has access to resources and its former colonies benefit from the political stability and developmental aid that derives from

French presence in the region. For instance, Chafer's (2006) research suggests that the neo-colonial tendencies that have long characterized Franco-African relations are no longer existent, as the primary relationship between the two countries has shifted from a political to an economic one. In fact, for Chafer, the '*Francafrique'* disappeared in the 1990s with the emergence of new actors such as multinational corporations, because "the defining feature of this relationship was that it was state centered" and characterized by "a dense web of personal ties and affinities" (Chafer, 2006, p.11). In addition, Chafer argues that the generation of old school '*Francafrique'* supporters are no longer present, whether in France or African nations. Instead, he claims the newer generation of policy makers' intentions are of promoting economic self-sufficiency and democracy. However, Chafer's analysis fails to take into account the fact that while French policy in Africa has rebranded itself as a proponent of democracy and economic liberalism, the old practices remain, further advanced by multinational corporations whose interest align with France's.

Felix Houphouet-Boigny and the legacy of Franco-Ivorian relations

The close relationship between Cote d'Ivoire's first president, Felix Houphouet-Boigny, and France has helped shape the nature of their dynamic today. While Houphouet-Boigny was instrumental in changing discriminatory policies within the French colonial rule—such as making sure that Ivorian upper class plantation owners were able to compete on the same terms as European ones—he was opposed to full independence (Handloff, 1991). In fact, he supported the idea of a semi-autonomous regional alliance presided over by France, similar to the one that was created by then-president Charles de Gaulle after WWII. Under the 1956 reforms known as *loi de cadre,* leaders of French colonies—of which Houphouet-Boigny was a member—were allowed to take part of the decision making process with regards to their domestic policies (Handloff, 1991). Houphouet-Boigny remained a supporter of French presence in Africa until independence movements among other colonies (such as Senegal and Mali) grew stronger and Cote d'Ivoire ended up following suit in 1960.

Still, Houphouet-Boigny retained his ties with French officials and continue to promote policies that were beneficial to France; in the 20 years following his rise to presidency, the number of French immigrants working in Cote d’Ivoire nearly doubled, thanks to cultural and technical cooperation accords that allowed for Cote d’Ivoire to benefit from French ‘savoir-faire’ (Handloff, 1991). As a result, most in the French community occupied civil servant jobs such as political and economic advisors, teachers and managers. During his rule, Houphouet-Boigny quickly became known as the poster child for Franco-African relations. In fact, Chafer (2006) refers to his ties with French officials as ‘familial’, since they exhibited the following characteristics: (1) meetings held between the two countries were “more like a family gathering than an official summit meeting, as there is no published agenda and they issue no final communique” (Chafer, 2006, p. 4), (2) successive French presidents insisted on the idea that part of the colonial heritage was the creation of a ‘family’ linking France to its former colonies, and placing it in the position of providing economic, political and economic support (Chafer, 2006) (3) finally, the community of French and African leaders formed was is called a *réseau* (personal network) characterized by the interlinking of personal, state and party interests (Chafer, 2006). This aspect of the relationship was more notorious as it allowed African leaders such as Houphouet-Boigny himself to consolidate their power in their respective countries with little accountability.

French African Policy throughout Three Presidencies

Over the years, French presidents themselves have strongly supported continued presence in African affairs regardless of their party affiliations. This research’s scope includes the tenure of three past French presidents, Jacques Chirac (1995-2007), Nicolas Sarkozy (2007-2012) and Francois Hollande (2012-2017), all of whom have perpetuated the *Francafrique* agenda despite publicly proclaiming different views. France has been facing criticism from both international organizations such as the WTO for their preferential trade relationships with West African countries, and from activists, both French and West African, denouncing France's hegemonic policies in the region. in response to this, contemporary presidents (especially since Chirac) have adopted a more subtle approach, at least in their public discourse.

These three presidencies are significant because with Chirac's rise to power in 1995 came a new generation of French presidents that are, at least in theory, recognizing and condemning the *Françafrique* model and the neocolonialist relationship it stands for. In practice however, there has been little effective change, but rather a shift from consolidating France's political influence in the region to strengthening its *economic* relationship—and expand it to include countries that weren't its former colonies (such as Nigeria and Ghana). It is customary for every French president to go on a tour of Francophone West Africa soon after their inauguration, to set the agenda for their tenure's 'African policies'. By analyzing each of the three presidents most significant speeches and comparing them to the actual changes in real life policies—at least in Cote d'Ivoire, we will be able to assess whether there has been truly a change in France's attitude towards Africa.

After his inauguration in 1995, Jacques Chirac's 'African tour' started with a visit to Yamoussoukro, the Ivorian capital. In an address to French nationals residing in the country, Chirac expressed his commitment to providing economic and political support to Cote d'Ivoire. He started by denouncing what he calls "afro-pessimisme" (Chirac, 1995, p. 4), the prevalent outlook that considers Africa endemically prone to conflicts, famine, and misery, as based not on facts but an unwillingness to acknowledge what he sees as the significant economic, political and social improvements African countries have made since their independence with the help of international organizations.

> "Aujourd'hui nous voyons dans la plupart des pays africains, et en particulier en Afrique francophone, s'affirmer chaque jour davantage une gestion plus rigoureuse, un accord plus fort entre les organisations internationales chargées de conseiller,

> d'aider ou d'orienter et, des gouvernements africains de plus en plus composés d'hommes compétents et déterminés à sortir d'une certaine improvisation" [Today we see in many African countries, especially Francophone Africa, better management and better cooperation between different international organizations in charge of advising, helping or guiding and African government that are increasingly made up of competent men determined to stop improvising [their policies]]

Rather than acknowledging the history of colonization that has been a major impediment to development on the continent, Chirac attributes economic struggles to the poor leadership of its leaders. What's more, he completely sets aside France's role in that history and rather places himself as Africa's advocate against the pessimistic naysayers of the international community "*Moi, je suis de ceux qui croient en l'Afrique et qui ne pense pas que l'Afrique est marquée par une sorte de fatalité (…) Il convient de se mobiliser contre cette tendance perverse et dangereuse*" [I am of those who believe in Africa and who do not think that Africa is struck by some sort of fatality (…) it is imperative to stand up against this perverse and dangerous trend] (Chirac, 1995, p.3). However, despite his promise for a change in the dynamic of Franco-African relations, the first few years of Chirac's presidency showed more of a continuity of the *Francafrique* model. In fact, he later made the decision to support then Congolese President Mobutu Sese Seko, long after his army's crimes against humanity were denounced by the international community (Chafer, 2006). In 1999 however, when Houphouet-Boigny's confidant and successor Konan Bédié was overthrown in a military coup, then Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, a socialist, overrode the Chirac-backed push to intervene and put Bédié back in power—interrupting a longstanding tradition of intervening to support pro-France African leaders (Chafer, 2006).

Soon after his inauguration, Chirac's successor, Nicolas Sarkozy, stated a willingness to fundamentally change Franco-African relations for the better. In fact, even as Minister of Interior in 2006, he called for "turning over a new leaf, leaving behind complacency, government agencies, secrecy and ambiguity" (Sarkozy, 2006). Despite being acclaimed for it by most of African youth and critics of French neo-colonialism, his approach was of concern for long time African leaders who had benefited from protection and support from France thus far (LeGouriellec, 2011).

However, any hopes of significant changes were quickly dismantled when Sarkozy delivered his first speech in an African country, in Dakar, Senegal. Riddled with patronizing claims and factually incorrect remarks, Sarkozy's infamous Dakar address triggered a wave of anti-France sentiment across Francophone Africa. In fact, as LeGouriellec (2011, p.4) states, he portrayed the African as naturally incapable of rationality and responsibility by declaring "*Le drame de l'Afrique, c'est que l'homme africain n'est pas assez entré dans l'histoire (…). Jamais l'homme ne s'élance vers l'avenir (…). Dans cet univers où la nature commande tout (…) il n'y a de place ni pour l'aventure humaine, ni pour l'idée de progrès"* [the tragedy of Africa is that the African man has never really entered History (...). He never leaps towards the future (…). In this universe where Nature commands all (…), there is no room either for human adventure or for the idea of progress] (Sarkozy, 2007). Instead of limiting France's presence in Africa, Sarkozy rather encouraged what he called a transition from *Francafrique* to *Eurafrique* (Sarkozy, 2007) during which he encouraged other members of the European Union to engage with the continent (LeGouriellec, 2011). While this is the first time this phenomenon was acknowledged and supported by a French president, the integration of France of European Union had already, in practice, provided for other members of the EU a gateway into West Africa. Since the late 1990s, the Netherlands and Germany in particular have emerged as top exporters of Ivoirian cocoa beans and paste (OEC, 2017).

In response to Sarkozy's speech in Dakar, scholars across Francophone Africa have published a co-authored book, *L'Afrique répond à Sarkozy: Contre le Discours de Dakar* [Africa responds to Sarkozy: Against the Dakar Speech] (2008), in which they heavily criticized Sarkozy's approach to Franco-African relations. They particularly warned against Sarkozy's proposed policy solutions, which positioned France as Africa's guide to development ("*codéveloppement"*). In congruence with IMF and World Bank doctrines, Sarkozy encouraged the use of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) between African and European countries, which, as shown in the "Impact of French-Ivorian relationship on Ivorian economy" section of this paper, do little to help African economies reach self-sustaining growth. In addition to this policy of *codéveloppement,* Sarkozy criticizes what he calls the "collectivism and progressivism" (Sarkozy, 2007) of African governments, specifically referring to protectionist and interventionist policies that are mostly meant to provide social nets and protect local infant industries in African. These recommendations of state non-intervention, also backed by the IMF and World Bank, are largely seen by African economists as a way to assure little to no local competition to multinationals that settle in the area (Gassama et al. 2008). Sarkozy's harsh, neoliberal policies contrast highly with his successor's, François Hollande, who had a softer, less patronizing approach to France's Africa policy throughout his term.

Five years after Sarkozy's infamous Dakar speech, François Hollande returned to Dakar to address the Senegalese Assembly upon his inauguration in 2012. This time, President Hollande was sure to be careful in his word choice regarding France and Africa's relationship. In fact, he proclaimed "*Je ne suis pas venu ici, à Dakar pour montrer un exemple, pour imposer un modèle, ni pour délivrer une leçon. Je considère les Africains comme des partenaires, comme des amis."* [I did not come here, in Dakar, to give an example, to impose a model or teach a leson. I consider Africans my partners, my friends.] (Hollande, 2012). As opposed to his predecessor, who argued for less state interventions in African economies while at the same time restricting the inflow of African products and people in France, Hollande insisted on a reciprocity in the concessions the two regions made to each other. He adds "*le temps de la Françafrique est révolu"* [the time of *Françafrique* is over] (Hollande, 2012). His speech advocated for the transition of France from a hegemonic power to equal partner in Francophone Africa. In his proposal, he expressed his willingness to give African countries more weight in economic and trade agreements and a more cooperative effort in political interventions (Hollande, 2012). Francois Hollande's "Africa policy" is, in many ways, a departure from Chirac's and Sarkozy's in that it puts forth a less paternalistic role for France in the region. Nevertheless, his tenure is still characterized by realpolitik; such as France's controversial unilateral military intervention in Mali, in 2013.

Throughout these three presidencies, a progressive decline of the *Françafrique* can be observed, at least in theory. In practice, France did mostly refrain from unilateral militaristic intervention in Francophone Africa, and instead has focused on expanding its economic position. Regional agreements such as EPAs and groups such as the CFA alliance allow France to maintain a strong foothold in the region's economic structure.

CFA: A Unique Monetary & Trade Agreement

The CFA was first created in 1945 as a common monetary system for France's African colonies under the name *Colonies Françaises d'Afrique* [French Colonies of Africa]. It was centered around three characteristics: a common foreign reserve system for all countries, a monetary agreement based on a fixed exchange rate, and the free convertibility of all currencies into each other at the fixed exchange rate (Canac & Garcia-Contreras, 2011). Under these principles, the adhering countries (excluding France) agreed to keep 60 percent of their foreign reserves at an Operations Account at the French treasury in Paris. Since their currency is pegged (fixed) to the French franc (later the euro), any change in valuation would have to be approved by French government and a unanimous vote of all members of the *Banque Centrale des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest* (BCEAO) (Canac & Garcia-Contreras, 2011). After gaining their independence, most countries in West Africa decided to remain in this economic and monetary union, which kept the 'CFA' acronym but under the name of *Communauté Financière Africaine* [African Financial Community]. The aforementioned BCEAO was consequently created in 1959 in order to issue the CFA franc from Dakar, Senegal. The other characteristics of the union, including the peg to the French franc were maintained throughout the transition.

The peg has caused several problems for countries such as Cote d'Ivoire who relied upon income from exports to sustain their economies. In fact, when the price of raw commodities fell in the 1980s, decreasing the amount of foreign currency coming to the country, CFA countries struggled to keep enough foreign reserves in their economy to sustain the peg and it was subsequently devaluated in 1994. The devaluation was followed by a period of relative stability, because CFA countries were allowed to sustain the peg by borrowing an unlimited amount of reserves from the Operations Account; and capital flows in and out the region were regulated in order to prevent speculative attacks from investors.

At the same time, the economic and monetary union was renegotiated and repackaged as the WAEMU (West African Economic and Monetary Union). Under this new alliance, the French Treasury would continue lending the West African Central Bank (located in Dakar, Senegal) as many foreign reserves as needs to maintain the peg at its current value. In exchange, the banks have to surrender their foreign reserves other than euros, and allow the French government to appoint members of their board—who play a critical role in shaping the monetary policies of all countries included in the union (Canac & Garcia-Contreras, 2011). The main reason this practice continues to be sustained is the relative cost to the French treasury and taxpayers, which never exceeded 2% of French GDP (Veyrune, 2007). In this paper, the main concern is whether or not this arrangement is economically beneficial for Cote d'Ivoire.

Impact of French-Ivorian relationship on Ivorian economy

Cote d'Ivoire remains one of the strongest economies in the WAEMU, representing 33 percent of the region's overall GDP (World Bank, 2009). One of the main reasons for Côte d'Ivoire meteoric rise to top economy in West Africa is the substantial size of its raw material exports—namely cocoa, rubber and sugar in the 1960s and 1970s. Coupled with then-President Houphouët-Boigny's strong ties with French officials and companies, this large influx of foreign reserves helped Côte d'Ivoire build strong infrastructure and provide stable employments for a few decades. However, like any other raw material export-oriented economy, it remains sensitive to international price fluctuations and foreign trade policies, as both factors carry a disproportionate impact on its GDP (Canac & Garcia-Contreras, 2011). In the 1980s, the fall in the price of commodities, followed by a sharp drop in export revenues, led to a significant economic crisis, affecting small business owners and increasing unemployment in the country.

Today still, local businesses struggle to subsist in an economy where the focus has been the export of raw materials instead of diversifying and strengthening the manufacturing sector. In fact, its main exports remain cocoa products (53 percent of total exports in 2017), and rubber (11 percent) (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2017). The BCEAO, which retains close ties to France, has been maintaining conservative policies that makes it harder for small businesses to borrow money and expand their share of the market (Mitter, 2015). Canac and Garcia-Contreras argue in their research that the relative cost of France maintaining its relationship with its former West African colonies, especially Cote d'Ivoire is minimal when compared to the gains it gets in return. Goods and services imported from France represent 16% of Côte d'Ivoire's total imports, making it a sizeable actor in the country's economy (OEC, 2017). Of these goods, most are packaged medications and food stuff such as wheat and wine.

Since most of Côte d'Ivoire's agricultural sector is diverted towards cash crops that are high in demand in the international community, foods that are for direct consumption are exported from France and China (OEC, 2017). However, it is important to note that over the years, France has lost its privileged status as a top importer in Ivory Coast. Today, most of Côte d'Ivoire's imports come from China (20 percent of total imports in 2017), although France is a close second (17 percent of imports (OEC, 2017). Nonetheless, while the current globalization trends allow for actors other than France to emerge in trade relations, the institutional link that remains between France and Côte d'Ivoire explains why it is still relevant to study their relationship.

In fact, bilateral agreements (EPAs) between Côte d'Ivoire and France have perpetuated this situation of dependency. First, the previously mentioned push for cash crop exports instead of promoting food security adds to the precarious situation of African nations. Second, these EPAs often include TRIPs or Trade-Related Intellectual Property rights, which prevent African countries from accessing to technological knowledge held by other nations (Canac and Garcia-Contreras, 2011). In recent years however, Côte d'Ivoire has taken steps to encourage domestic manufacturing. Together with Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire produces 60% of the world's cocoa but virtually none of it is processed within its borders (Ochieng, 2017). The Ivorian government is now trying to entice its local businesses to start producing chocolate, in hopes of penetrating the European market with more competitive products that just raw materials. Diversification of the economy, namely through the expansion of the manufacturing sector, is an essential step for Côte d'Ivoire to achieve self-sustaining growth. While its economic growth has averaged 8% in the last few years (Ochieng, 2017), the Ivorian economy is still prone to a crisis if the global price of raw commodities were to substantially fall like they did in the 1980s. Without the ability to control its monetary policy to transition out of an export-oriented economy, long-term sustainable economic growth will be harder to achieve.

In their 2017 study, "Some Peculiarities of the Economic Growth in ECOWAS Countries", Ndiaye, Sarpe and Manga suggested that West African leaders should start focusing on factors other than export value in order to fuel economic growth. They emphasized on the importance of value added of agriculture, meaning the transformation of raw materials into processed goods. In their analysis of West African economies, Ndiaye et al. came to the conclusion countries could increase and stabilize their growth rates as well as create labor by making sure that the raw materials they produce–cocoa beans for the case of Côte d'Ivoire–are processed and turned into manufactured goods within their borders before being exported (Ndiaye, 2017).

Alternatives to the CFA? Local responses to French presence

It would be false to assume that West African scholars, leaders and activists have remained passive throughout their tumultuous relationship with France. There has been ongoing dialogue and calls to action both in and outside the continent from notable economists, writers and activists such as Achille Mbembe of Cameroon or Nicolas Agboho of Côte d'Ivoire.

Since the mid-1990s, as the anti-globalization movement gained momentum across the world, civil society organizations (CSOs) across West Africa have organized to protest the *Françafrique* relationship. Originally a taboo in the African intellectual community, the issue of the CFA is becoming more mainstream and widely addressed, especially since the counter-globalization protests that took place in Dakar, Senegal in 2012 (Sylla, 2016).

Prior to these more pronounced calls to actions however, West African leaders have tried to remedy the lack of intraregional cooperation and Western economic dominance in the trade arena. In 1975, both English and French speaking countries in West Africa convened in Nigeria to sign the Treaty of Lagos, thus establishing the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). By doing so, West African States were hoping to bridge the gap their different colonial legacies created between them and boost intraregional trade and cooperation. The ECOWAS has had limited success in reaching its goals of collective self-sufficiency and growth for all its members. It remains one of the best performing regional blocs in Africa (in 2010, its growth rate of 6.7% was the highest among all 5 regional economic communities on the continent) (Ndiaye, 2017). However, growth rates for each individual country remain highly unstable and fluctuate throughout the years, mainly due to the nature of their economies. Similar to Côte d'Ivoire, a majority of ECOWAS members depend on cash crop or other natural resources exports to fuel their economic growth. In the event of changes in demand or international prices, entire economies are threatened, a concern that has yet to be addressed by institutional bodies such as the ECOWAS.

In the face of the complacency of institutions, civil society activists and organizations have mobilized to advocate for more radical changes in the nature of the relationship between France and its former colonies. In January 2017, a group of African activists and economists created *Ugences Panafricanistes* [SOS Pan-Africa], a grassroots organization rallying movements across West Africa against the franc CFA and French hegemony.

Kemi Seba, a critical actor in the creation of *Urgences Panafricansistes*, has organized anti-CFA demonstrations in several countries including Côte d'Ivoire and France. His most recent intervention, an anti-CFA conference in Yopougon, Côte d'Ivoire, was set to take place right after the spring meeting of the finance ministers of the BCEAO in March 2019. The conference was to address the continuation of the anti-CFA struggle and was an explicit front to Ivorian President Allassane Ouattara, who has often been criticized for his complacence in the *Françafrique.* However, Seba was arrested a few hours prior to his conference and was deported back to his home country, Benin (Jeune Afrique, 2019). Today still, URPANAF continues its mobilization efforts across several countries in West Africa and in France by raising awareness and inciting action against what they see as a continuation of colonization.

Conclusion

The answer to whether or not France's relationship with Cote d'Ivoire (and, to a larger extent, its other former colonies) is beneficial remains debated among economists and politicians alike. For France, it seems obvious that the cost of maintaining a strong presence in West Africa is minimal compared to the virtually unrestricted access to natural resources and markets it obtains. For Cote d'Ivoire, the relationship with France meant a relative macroeconomic stability and access to trade partnerships with other European countries, all of which has helped it in its economic growth.

However, a closer look at the trade and monetary agreements between the two parties shows that, in accordance to Dos Santos' definition of dependency, Cote d'Ivoire's growth is not self-sustaining but rather contingent on and limited by French policies. In this situation of dependency, one country (France) benefits greatly while the other (Cote d'Ivoire) remains undeveloped (Canac & Garcia-Contreras, 2011). The current relationship prevents Cote d'Ivoire from diversifying its economy, a step that would allow it to exert more autonomy in its domestic affairs. In order to achieve this state of self-determination, Cote d'Ivoire must be able to diversify its sources of foreign investment and foreign trading partners and expand its industrial sector. With the recent emergence of China as a competitive economic power and a main source of import in Africa, it is crucial for Côte d'Ivoire to learn from its experience with France and prevent its economy from becoming economically dependent on China in the coming years.

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