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Africa

# The redeployment of French imperialism in Africa and the humanitarian daze of the left

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**The military operations decided by Paris in Libya (from March 2011), Mali (in January 2013) and the Central African Republic (CAR) (in December 2013), to which must be added the decisive intervention of the Licorne force to oust Gbagbo in the Ivory Coast (April 2011), have contributed to reviving the debate on the current strategy of French imperialism in Africa. What in fact are the causes of this increased warlike activism?**

In Libya and the Ivory Coast, one could argue without difficulty that Nicolas Sarkozy harboured ulterior economic motives, but it seems less obvious on the part of François Hollande in Mali, and highly questionable in the CAR. Hence the appeal of some critical observers "to avoid any summary anti-imperialism" [1], which often comes down to pointing the finger at the unbridled greed of the rentiers of Françafrique [2]. In fact, although no serious observer can believe the humanitarian motives put forward by Paris, it seems clear that the sending of shock troops to prevent the definitive shipwreck of "failed states" such as the CAR is in the first place motivated by the need to maintain security in its "backyard", which is a condition for the credibility of France on the threshold of a new "scramble for Africa". [3]

## What French presence south of the Mediterranean?

As a recent report of the Senate would like us to believe, there is, on the one hand, "dynamic Africa (...), courted by emerging countries, which can be for us [meaning companies of the CAC 40] a tremendous reservoir of growth," and on the other "black holes" like the CAR, in which France, in conjunction with the USA and the European Union (EU), the Security Council of the UN, the African Union (AU) and regional organizations, is responsible for conducting police operations with the aim of avoiding contagion from infected areas that threaten the promising economic dynamics of the continent [4]. The public and private circles that today set the tone for France's African policy share this conception of the complementary roles, in a market that is increasingly competitive, of the big corporations and of a state with a diverse implantation and solid experience, military in particular, on the continent, particularly because of its colonial and postcolonial history.

Sometimes the security options of the government may even push it to interfere with the economic strategy of French companies. For example, *Charlie-Hebdo* (in its issues of 4 and 11 February 2013) recently evoked an intervention of the Elysée, supported by King Mohammed VI, to persuade Vivendi not to sell Morocco Telecom to the Qatari company Ooredoo, which had been until then in the best position, and which was suspected of collusion with the Muslim fundamentalists in northern Mali. Since it seems that this subsidiary of the French group controlled the main operators in the Sahel, it seems to have had great importance for military intelligence, invested in Operation Serval. This approach turned out to be fruitful, since it was finally the UAE group Etisalat that won the deal. We can imagine that the Quai d'Orsay must have breathed a sigh of relief: the relations between Paris and Dubai, we read on the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, are in fact marked by "a strong convergence of views on regional questions": the two states "hold consultations at the highest level (...) very regularly" against a background of flourishing economic relations.

Conversely, it is common knowledge that the policy of Paris in Congo-Brazzaville, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Mali, Niger, the CAR, Senegal, Chad, etc., is inconceivable without the careful advice of the AREVA group, Bolloré, Bouygues, Total and others. It would be tedious to repeat here the incestuous triangular links forged by the French government with a certain number of companies and potentates in the Françafricain theatre, which have been denounced by François-Xavier Verschave in particular (Françafrique, 1999, Noir Silence, 2000) and by the association Survie.

Despite the disappearance of the General Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic for African and Malagash Affairs of Jacques Foccart (1960-1974), which became the "Africa cell" of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, François Mitterrand and Jacques Chirac (1974-2007), successive advisors to Nicolas Sarkozy and François Hollande have continued to keep alive these special networks, with the help of some dubious personalities. Thus we have seen the UMP deputy and mayor of Levallois-Perret, Patrick Balkany, and the former honorary consul of France in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), George Forrest, "the king of Katanga" playing matchmakers in the acquisition by AREVA in June 2007, for 1.8 billion euros, of the majority of the shares in the uranium deposit of Bakouma (CAR) from the Canadian UraMin [5].

## In search of a new African strategy

However, nothing could be more misleading than to consider French imperialism in Africa solely through the prism of its private "postcolonial hunting grounds", even though it is also premature to predict the extinction of *Françafrique*. [6] ] Between October and December 2013, the French authorities commissioned no less than three voluminous documents on the strategic perspectives of France in Africa: the report of 29 October 2013, presented in the name of the Commission on Foreign Affairs, Defence and the Armed Forces of the Senate [7]

The strategic thinking that interests the French bourgeoisie relates first to the future importance of Africa for its fundamental interests, and then on how best to manage its postcolonial heritage at a time when the continent appears increasingly as a hotly contested "new frontier" of globalization. On the first point, there is a belated recognition of the robust growth of African economies since the late 1990s. Up until then, the public debate was monopolized by the Afro-pessimism of Stephen Smith, depicting the descent into hell of a continent plagued by poverty, "mercenary wars", tribalism, corruption and the collapse of states (*Négrologie*, Calmann- Levy, 2003). However, as early as 2008, a report by Credit Suisse was already attracting the attention of finance on the new investment opportunities in Africa. [8] In 2009, Alwyn Young, professor at the London School of Economics (LSE), published a paper that was much discussed in France: "The African Growth Miracle." A year later, McKinsey & Co. produced its provocative report on the endogenous factors of African growth: "The Time of the Lions". The same year, Jean-Michel Severino, a former functionary of the World Bank (WB) and the French Development Agency (AFD), who is today head of an investment fund in Africa, published "The Time of Africa", a book co-authored with Olivier Ray. Since then he has said repeatedly that fifteen years ago the GDP of the continent was the same as Belgium's; it is now the equivalent of France's, and in twenty years it could be equal to that of China. [9]

Without discussing here how serious these predictions are, I will simply recall that in the last decade at least, according to the OECD, GDP in sub-Saharan Africa has actually grown faster than in the rest of the world (+ 5.5 per cent per year), and that its imports have skyrocketed (+16 per cent per year). The main reasons for this boom are well-known. First, improved terms of trade (+38 per cent per cent from 2000 to 2012), related to the very strong increase in demand for energy resources and raw materials from emerging countries (half of Africa's exports today are destined for emerging and developing countries, against less than a quarter in 1990). Again according to the OECD, in 2011, 80 per cent of the continent's exports, given that it holds one third of the mineral resources of the planet, [10] consisted of unprocessed or semi-processed products (against 60 per cent for Brazil, 40 per cent for India and 14 per cent for China). Global demand for arable land and hydroelectric resources is also steadily increasing [11] : considered to be largely "unexploited", the African continent's resources are therefore being taken over by foreign investors at the expense of their current occupants, who are reduced to the status of uprooted paupers.

Finally, despite its vast disaster areas, populated by 200 million inhabitants, who are sinking under the increasing blows of murderous violence and abject poverty, the global market consumption of Africa is experiencing significant and regular growth, largely due to a rise in the volume of employment (10 million per year) and the increase in

remittances (\$60 billion per year). Despite the explosion of inequality, the sustainability of this expansion therefore favours the emergence of a bigger and bigger layer of micro-consumers, already stronger, according to some studies, than that of India, which could generate promising commercial opportunities for foreign investors and suppliers, especially those in emerging markets, better prepared to respond to this type of demand: between 2008 and 2012, the share of investment for the creation of new capacity (greenfield investment) in the sectors of goods and services related to consumption increased from 7 to 23 per cent [12]; in the same period, the number of subscribers to mobile phones has more than doubled, reaching today 500-620 million users, according to estimates [13]. To go on from there to talk about the rise of a 'middle class' takes a lot of imagination, but that is precisely what is least lacking with the current ideologues of Afro-optimism.

## Make better use of the colonial legacy

In a context of increased competition, which has seen the contribution of French imperialism to exports and to the supply of credit to the continent fall by more than 50 per cent in ten years [14], while its growing demand for hydrocarbons has absorbed its traditional trade surplus, falling back on the high rents of the "backyard" in the CFA zone is a lost cause. This can be demonstrated by the rapid decline of its interests in the most dynamic countries in the sub-region (Cameroon, Ivory Coast), which did not resist for long to exposure to competition from emerging countries, particularly China, but also from the USA, Germany, the UK and even Japan. In July 2012, the CFAO (automobile and pharmaceutical distribution) was sold by Pinault-Printemps-Redoute (PPR) to Toyota (which launched into distribution in partnership with Carrefour). However, the stock of French investment in Africa, \$39 billion, still gives it - for how long? - a leading position on the continent. [15]

Given the incestuous relations maintained by part of the political personnel of the French right with the traditional economic actors and the potentates of *Françafrique*, it is not surprising that the relaunching of the strategic debate was triggered mostly by opinion leaders from the "left" and the business community. Thus the proposals emanating from the ongoing discussions are voiced largely by politicians of Mitterrandist, Chevènementist or even Communist origin (Robert Hue), who have gone over to social-liberalism or the centre-right, and who often openly profession Blairism, such as Jean-Marie Bockel. Remember that in 2007 Bockel had to leave the Socialist Party (PS) in accepting the position of Secretary of State for Cooperation and Francophonie (the "community" of French-speaking countries) in the Fillon government, a position that he had to abandon the following year under the pressure of the presidents of Congo and Gabon, for having urged Nicolas Sarkozy ... to break with *Françafrique*.

In fact, despite the obligatory rhetoric, the entrenchment of France in West and Central Africa is not opposed to its continental designs. On the contrary, its history in the sub-region - and in North Africa - could be a springboard to address the broader African ambitions of its largest companies, provided it does not lead to the crystallization of "anti-competitive rents" in favour of less productive SMEs or even semi-mafia networks. For that, French imperialism must certainly continue to defend its position in North Africa, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Gabon, Cameroon, Congo-Brazzaville, etc., challenged by increasingly aggressive competitors. The fact that a substantial part of the activities of its major groups continues to thrive is a significant asset. [16] At the same time, it must try to build on this potential to penetrate other French-speaking countries where there is still not much investment, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), but also to use "economic corridors", regional carriers, in order to be closer to English-speaking and Portuguese-speaking Africa, where it lags far behind, even though the CAC 40 companies are now extremely active there [17]. In this context, the abandonment of the South African market by *Crédit Agricole* was very bad news.

More than half of its stock of investments in sub-Saharan Africa is already in South Africa and Nigeria, which, however, only absorb slightly more than a quarter of its exports. [18] In other words, the semi-colonial super-products that are still available, because they allow a "much higher rate of return for French business" [19] should be exploited

in a conquering perspective, rather than frittered away in managing interests in a backward-looking way that has no future. Having said that, none of the advocates of the redeployment of French interests on a continental scale would dream of demanding that Areva should relinquish the highly favourable agreements from which it benefits in Niger and the CAR, on the grounds that they would be inconceivable in an open market. [20]. Thus the official reports published in 2013, which I have already largely cited, are full of calls for an imperialist strategy that is more coherent, but also conquering, which can take full advantage of the economic, demographic, political, cultural, military, etc. advantages which France still possesses on the African continent in order to meet new challenges.

## Towards the "economic reconquest of the continent"

"Countries that invest in Africa today base themselves on a strategy of power carried by states," note the authors of the Védrine Report, at the beginning of a chapter entitled "Reinvesting all the levers of influence of the French presence on the continent." Further, they state that such efforts should aim to "capture the profits from oil, mining and land rent, and from public service contracts". [21] In short, the main official reports published in 2013 agree on the following points:

1. Better defence and promotion of the economic positions that France still has in *Françafrique*: a high share of total imports, a considerable stock of foreign direct investment (FDI), returns on profitable investments, etc.
2. Taking advantage of the French presence in North Africa to facilitate the penetration of sub-Saharan markets. For example, an ambitious Franco-Moroccan partnership aims to develop in the near future French higher education in Morocco, largely open to students from sub-Saharan Africa in priority areas (management, engineering, architecture, health).
3. Extension of the CFA zone [22] (the CFA is a currency used by 135 million inhabitants in 14 countries) to other neighboring countries. Let us remember that it helps to improve the security of investors by depriving African countries of any monetary and fiscal sovereignty. It is starting from this platform that France has also been promoting, for twenty years, the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA), which includes 17 states, as well as an integrated market for insurance, which tends to prevent a state changing its laws independently. [23]
4. Maximum use of the action of public and private agents of "development aid" in order to assist the financing of French investments, but also to act upstream of tenders (technical cooperation).
5. Promotion of Francophonie by the development of the teaching of French in Africa and the enrolment of young Africans in elite French institutions of higher education: with 50,500 sub-Saharan students, mainly from Senegal, Cameroon, Gabon, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, French universities come out on top among those in OECD countries. Similarly, the training of primary school teachers for African schools should be a priority. Moreover, the spread of French culture and the reach of its media, especially audiovisual (RFI, TV5 Monde Africa, Canal +, AITV/RFO) are "so many vectors of 'pre-sale' of French brands". [24] The numerous partnerships between French and African towns and cities also play a significant role in this, particularly in Mali.
6. Absorption of money transfers of African migrants working in France [25] (â, ~4.8 billion), of whom a growing number acquire French nationality, by French banks operating in Africa, which could benefit from this to cover commercial credits on the African continent.

7. Exploitation of the role that can be played by French people abroad, of whom 235,000 reside in Africa, half in sub-Saharan Africa. Indeed, half of them are no longer expatriates, but "mixed bi-nationals", which may give them a stronger role as a link between France and Africa.
8. Intensified contacts with African elites, including in civil society [26]: visa procedures made easy for businessmen, cultural figures, etc., with the risk of encouraging a greater brain drain; proliferation of exchange networks (partnerships of local authorities, voluntary cooperation reoriented to the economy, networks of former students and aspiring leaders, Franco-African business forum, etc.).
9. "Military contribution to the security of the continent": starting from existing points of support in the Sahara-Sahel band and on the two oceanic facades of the continent.

For the authors of the Védrine Report, "France realized belatedly that it did not have an integrated strategic vision of its interests in sub-Saharan Africa; many sectoral approaches exist but are scattered and incomplete (strategic vision of the White Paper on defence and national security, 'raw materials diplomacy', foreign trade strategy, priorities for the countries of the French Development Agency (AFD), role of Francophonie ... The initiatives taken recently to redefine the economic action of France with Africa must be deepened rapidly and in an operational and holistic way." France is "making it up as it goes along", whereas it must aim to have a "national strategy for economic reconquest on the continent". [27] In this sense, they called for intensified development and reflection by asking for a more sustained investment in academic and entrepreneurial think tanks: the Old Africa group at the Institut Montaigne, CAPAFrique, Africa departments in the course of being established at the Lazard and Rothschild banks. This intellectual effort, based on the systematic collection of information, analysis and strategic discussion, etc., should be strongly encouraged by the creation of a Franco-African Foundation uniting the efforts of the public and private sectors.

## Role of the military factor

Since the aim of my contribution is to better understand the significance of the recent deployment of French forces in Ivory Coast, Libya, Mali and the CAR, I will focus particularly on the military aspect - not the least important - of the imperialist strategy of France in Africa. Let us recall at the outset that Paris has the following resources: more than 5,000 troops on the continent (the number of special forces is not known); a permanent presence in Ivory Coast, Chad, Senegal, Gabon, Djibouti and Reunion; defence partnerships with eight countries (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Comoros, Ivory Coast, Djibouti, Gabon, Senegal and Togo); agreements for training African officers; a significant network of aides and advisers and those engaged in military cooperation. "The military intervention of France in Mali, notes the Védrine Report (...) reminded us that France remained a real power in Africa (...)". The reporters of the Senate noted more soberly that "the example of Mali or the Central African Republic suggests that although France no longer holds the solution, it is perceived as a recourse" [28]. What is not said here by these officials is that the army has always enjoyed considerable autonomy of decision-making in Africa, in liaison with the Presidency of the Republic, which by its very nature escapes democratic debate.

For its part, the latest White Paper on Defence (April 2013) considers that France will continue to act independently, perhaps even more often than in the past, and consequently the Law of Military Planning (2014-19) gives priority to external operations (Opex) and special forces as against pre-positioned forces [29]. This should not reassure those who expect Paris to conduct peacekeeping missions in its former colonies. As far as Opex are concerned, I will simply recall Force Licorne opening fire on an unarmed crowd on November 9, 2004 in Abidjan., which is estimated to have left sixty people dead and more than a thousand wounded, [30] As for the Special Operations Command (COS), it bears a heavy legacy: established in 1992, following the first Gulf War, its aim was to bring together, under the discretionary authority of the President of the Republic and the Head of the General Staff of the Army (CEMA),



elite elements from the colonial troops [31] (RPIMa , Legion, DGSE). The first mission of its current commander, Gregoire de Saint-Quentin [32] was to train a battalion of Rwandan paratroop commandos who would play a key role in the genocide of Tutsis in 1994; having later become a lieutenant-colonel of the General Staff, this officer was promoted to commanding officer of the 1st RPIMa in 2006, brigadier-general in Senegal in 2011 and operational commander of Operation Serval in Mali in 2013, before replacing, a few months ago, General Gomart as head of the COS, with the perspective of its imminent reinforcement.

Having said that, it would be wrong to think that the most recent French interventions in Africa are simply repeating the tried and tested scenario of around fifty previous operations, apparently of the same type, since the 1960s. On the contrary, we must take seriously the claims of the Quai d'Orsay to situate the most recent of them within the framework of a UN mandate, supported by its European allies and the United States. First of all, because Paris is well aware that "the stabilization of the situation in the Sahel or the CAR, as well as in Kivu, depends primarily on the states of the region" [33], that this task is too heavy for France, and that it does not on its own hold the political keys. But also because the strengthening of French collaboration with the African Union and with regional organizations fits into the perspective announced by the Western powers of strengthening the national, regional and continental institutions of Africa, especially in the military field (peacekeeping operations, the African Intervention Force and regional brigades associated with it, the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises, [34], etc.), even though the financing of their operational resources remains largely the responsibility of the UN, the EU and the USA. The approval of the Security Council, but especially the mandate of the AU and presence on the ground of African forces (MINUSMA and MISCA) which should eventually take over, were politically indispensable for the Serval and Sangaris operations because they made it possible "to display for the eyes of African and French public opinion the African sense of the French military presence on the continent". [35]

Paris is in fact doing all it can to avoid resurrecting the image of France as the "gendarme of Africa", especially in a context where emerging countries can take advantage of their non-colonial past [36]. According to the reporters of the Senate, it was actually this risk that stopped France from "intervening unilaterally in the Central African Republic" last October. Indeed, "the themes of the colonial legacy, anti-imperialism and impaired sovereignty" are now coming back in force "in relations with Africa, in particular South Africa". [37] The new strategists of French imperialism are casting greedy eyes on the market share won by German companies in the land of Nelson Mandela by playing on the historical links of the Ebert Foundation with circles close to the ANC. [38] Is Robert Hue, the former leader of the French Communist Party (PCF) who has recently gone over to the centre-left, a candidate to play a similar role in France, as president of the Inter-parliamentary Friendship Group with South Africa? Was it not in this capacity that he was actively involved in drafting the voluminous report of the Senate in October 2013 "to relaunch France's relations with African countries, based on common interests in a renewed partnership"? That said, this effort has not so far fully borne fruit, since Jacob Zuma declined the invitation to the Franco-African Summit of 6-7 December at the Elysée in order to distance himself from French interventionism in Africa [39].

It is also in order to form a bloc with the Western powers against the emerging countries, in a framework that does not however evoke too directly its colonial past, that France appreciates military partnerships with its traditional allies, even if these allies are in no hurry to accept them. And it is certainly not the latest slip of the tongue of Bernard Kouchner that will lead them to change their minds: questioned, on January 2, about the lack of the British alongside France in the CAR, he came out with this on BFM TV: "What would have been nice is that they come along with us in Françafrique" (sic). And therein lies the rub: without beating about the bush, the Védrine Report in fact regrets the insufficient aptitude of the French diplomacy "to win markets in return for its military investments". [40]

## The left in a humanitarian daze

Let us recall that in 1952, in the eyes of Alfred Sauvy, who had just invented the neologism, the "Third World" was

really the "Third Estate" of the world, threatening with a violent revolution the productivist order which reigned in both the shape of the "capitalist aristocracy" and that of the "Communist clergy", "each in their own valley." Anti-imperialism, international matrix of the radical left of the "Vietnam years" had further radicalized this perception, since the combatants of the "Third World" were now the incarnation of the big battalions of the "wretched of the earth", finally arisen, from Asia to Latin America, not forgetting Africa, facing American imperialism and its allies. Since the late 1970s, however, the struggles of the Third World began to lose their ability to seduce in the eyes of a growing part of the Western left, while the first credible revelations filtered out about the scale of the genocide perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia and the Iranian people's revolution fell under the rule of the mullahs. Obviously, the activists from the political currents that were the most uncritical towards the leaderships of the liberation movements in the Third World were the first to be shaken.

For them, the peoples of the "South" no longer had anything intelligible to say, which is why they increasingly saw them as "helpless and silent victims" of natural disasters, wars and decontextualized fanaticism. And since we no longer had confidence in them to defend their rights and to propose collective solutions to their problems, all that was left was to "assist" in emergency situations. The society of spectacle would look after the rest: "the pathos of the crisis focuses attention on its immediate effects, prohibiting any analysis of the processes that produced it," and the emotion aroused by the sight of suffering commanded action: it was to be the "commandos in white coats" who would follow the paratroopers, to secure the zones of intervention [41]. From 1979, Bernard Henri-Lévy, whose enormous wealth comes from the exploitation of African rainforests [42], founded with others Action Against Hunger; in 1983, Pascal Bruckner published "The Tears of the White Man", where he rails against the bad third-worldist conscience of the West, while Andre Glucksmann, Bernard Kouchner, and Yves Montand publicly defended the hardening of France's engagement in Chad, decided in August of that year by François Mitterrand. This political volte-face was pounced on by Guy Hocquenghem in his *Open Letter to those who have gone from the Mao tunic to the Rotary Club* (Albin Michel, 1986; reprint, Agnone 2003).

Thirty years later, the Irish show business personality Bob Geldof, who had mobilized his comrades against the 1984 famine in Ethiopia, inspiring the song "We Are the World", is managing an investment fund in Africa. [43] Through being constantly repeated, the process is thoroughly well-oiled. And while a second socialist president also sends troops to Africa, first to Mali, "against jihadism" and then to the CAR, "in order to prevent a pre-genocidal situation," there are very few voices to be heard on the French left to denounce its own imperialism, demand the dismantling of military bases and the immediate departure of its troops from Africa. To understand this, it is enough to read attentively the communiqués about Operation Sangaris. In this concert of voices, only the NPA called unequivocally for the withdrawal of French troops from Africa [44] a demand to which should have been added at least the dismantling of the military bases and the unequal agreements signed with the dictatorships of the françafricain backyard.

The national secretary of the Left Party, François Delapierre, does not beat about the bush [45]: on the one hand, he does not challenge the military intervention in the CAR, "because it is situated fully in the framework of international law "and because "the dire humanitarian situation in the CAR also calls for intervention"; on the other hand, he defends the abandonment of the neoliberal model, which according to him would lead to the revival of the country's agriculture, and the abandonment of nuclear power, which would allow France to do without the uranium deposits of its former colonies (why not also make the restitution of the oilfields controlled by Total conditional on the abandonment of the internal combustion engine?). It is a specious reasoning, since the peasants of Central Africa are engaged in what is little more than subsistence agriculture, not directly related to the world market, and since the operation of the Bakouma mine has now been suspended. What purpose can such convolutions serve, except to validate a neocolonial military operation without appearing to do so. As for the PCF, its resolution of December 10 certainly makes a series of criticisms of the attitude of Paris, without however explicitly condemning the sending of troops, something which its elected representatives will not do either in Parliament.

Within the Left Front, the Anticapitalist Left defended a more articulate propagandist position. [46] After refusing



military intervention in the CAR and demanding "the end of the relationship of domination of France over its former colonies" - a goal that deserves to be more precisely defined - it adds: "To deal with the humanitarian catastrophe that is happening, to protect people from abuses and massacres, what is necessary is an international peacekeeping and intervention force under a UN mandate, of the African Union, but without the former colonial power." Is putting it like that not underestimating the limits of any UN mandate, decided de facto by the Security Council [47]? Moreover, does a joint commitment of the African Union guarantee that there will be no neocolonial aspect? Not really, to the extent that the AU receives nine-tenths of its budget from the major powers and subcontracts the operations that it approves to the dictators of the sub-region concerned, against a guarantee of Western funding ... In addition, in this case, the principal state of the AU, South Africa, perhaps in exchange for mining compensation, assisted François Bozizé unilaterally for years, training his Praetorian Guard - one of the forces that is most feared by the population of the CAR - with thirty instructors. [48] So what real significance must we give to the exclusion of "the former colonial power" from such a plan? Because in fact, if it was necessary to give responsibility for this "peacekeeping force" to another mentor, it would inevitably be the United States or Britain, which are not very enthusiastic and which also have important interests in the region.

## Perils of the "new scramble for Africa"

So what should be done? First of all, take note of the fact that the position of the French and Western radical left can today only have a propagandistic character, and that it is unfortunately not able to save human lives in the present crisis. Next, understand that we are all the more "disarmed" in that we inherit a European workers' movement that largely capitulated in the face of the transformation of the Congo Basin into a huge labour camp over three quarters of a century of colonization, to a large extent continued during several decades of neocolonial domination. Operation Sangaris should incite us to re-read the testimony of Albert Londres on the construction of the Congo-Ocean Railway (1921-1934), built by the Batignolles building company of the Radical Socialist Jean-Victor Augagneur, for which "the negro replaced the machine, the truck, the crane; why not explosives too? , and which cost about twenty thousand deaths. [49] It should especially make us pay tribute to the widespread peasant uprising of 1928-1932 against taxes and forced labour, which started in West Central Africa, the colonial repression of which was again responsible for thousands of victims. [50]

It is all the more essential to remember this history in that we are on the threshold of a second "scramble for Africa" (after the one in the late nineteenth century). In fact, despite the euphoric speeches of investors on the advent of an African century, the social and environmental impact of this treasure hunt could prepare future catastrophes of unparalleled proportions. Within the limits of this contribution, I will only mention here the main outlines:

1. A dependent growth, totally subordinated to foreign investment and world prices [51], driven by the export of raw materials and energy resources, but also by selling off farmland and the hydroelectric potential of the continent. Although Africa admittedly remains heavily exposed to the volatility of the prices of raw materials, it is unlikely that the tendency towards improved terms of trade will be reversed quickly, as it was in the 1980s and 1990s, given the scarcity of energy and mineral resources on a world scale and the still considerable proportion of deposits that have not yet been exploited, or even identified, on the continent. At the same time, this brutal "extractive" model, where profits are very unequally distributed, also causes an exponential increase in the pollution of air, soil and water, with disastrous health consequences.
2. A predatory accumulation, not only for the benefit of the imperialist bourgeoisie, but also of their African counterparts; such opportunities for enrichment lead to disputes by all possible means over the share of a growing rent. Jean Nanga emphasizes that some of its fractions do not hesitate to resort to predatory violence, mobilizing for that national, regional, ethnic and religious rivalries, to achieve their ends. [52] That is where we must look to find the motor forces of the internal conflicts in Ivory Coast and Mozambique, but also of several situations of transnational

war in Central Africa, self-maintained by the fraudulent exploitation of natural resources, in collaboration with powerful international interests. This can be done on a small scale in the CAR, by the smuggling of diamonds, gold and ivory [53] but also on a large scale in the DRC, where different military forces, backed up by the capitalist cliques of neighbouring countries (Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, etc.), accumulate fortunes by selling coltan ore to the big multinational corporations of the information technology and communications (ICT) sector.

3. A brutal accentuation of uneven development, which is plunging 17 countries (in the regions of the Great Lakes, northern Nigeria, the DRC, the Sahel, etc.) into a state of advanced social and political decomposition. In these regions, populated by 200 million people, 8 out of 10 people are trying to survive on subsistence agriculture, and 5 out of 10 have to settle for less than \$1.25 a day. Meanwhile, across the continent, the absolute number of poor continues to grow (nearly 400 million Africans live on less than \$1.25 per capita) and so therefore does malnutrition, morbidity and mortality. Countries with rapid economic growth, such as Angola and Nigeria, are also particularly notable in this respect. Thus the human development indices adjusted for inequality (IHDI) are falling more and more behind global HDI and the "millennium goals" will be far from being achieved.

4. Rapid population increase - within 25 years, Chad, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso should go from 57 to 160 million people - that is putting increasing pressure on arable land and causes increased tension between farmers and herders. This can take on the appearance of an "ethnic conflict", like the one between the semi-nomadic pastoralist Gabra and the Borana peasants of northern Kenya. Similarly, rapid urbanization poses acute problems of housing and hygiene: more than 60 per cent of "city-dwellers" live in slums, 80 per cent have no access to drinking water and 90 per cent are not connected to sewers. According to the African Development Bank (ADB), the investment capacities of public authorities are more than ten times lower than the minimum required to meet the basic needs of the 760 million urban that there are expected to be in 2030.

5. A massive rise in underemployment, particularly among young people. In the next 15 years, "330 million young Africans will enter the labour market (...). This is the present population of the United States". [54] The total active population should thus exceed one billion in 2040. At the same time, only a minority is in formal employment, especially among young people, 60 per cent are unemployed and almost three quarters live on less than \$2 a day. Under such conditions, African demography can turn into a nightmare, with masses of illiterate youth, camped in squalid shanty towns, mobilized by religious fundamentalists (Muslim or Pentecostal), and/or recruited into various armed movements in countries in crisis (child soldiers, etc.).

6. Increased migration pressure, mostly intra-African, which given the scarcity of available resources is highly likely to cause outbreaks of violence against "foreigners", as was the case, for example in 2008 in the Ivory Coast and in South Africa, but also in recent months the CAR. It should also result in increased flows of migrants to Europe, the United States, the Gulf, etc., but also to human tragedies associated with illegal immigration (smuggling networks, shipwrecks, detention camps, racist violence, super-exploitation, prostitution, etc.).

7. A particularly dramatic impact of global warming. The declining and increasingly erratic rainfall can only lead to a reduction of arable land (35 per cent with an increase in temperature of 4°C) and decreased crop yields (-26 per cent in the Sahel regions between now and 2060) - the impact of these phenomena is already causing a worsening of malnutrition in Niger. According to the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), 600 million more people could be at risk of hunger by 2080, largely in sub-Saharan Africa. Finally, 250 million Africans are living along coasts threatened by rising sea levels (between Abidjan and Lagos, 25 million people live below sea level, protected by increasingly threatened dunes). Still according to the IPCC, by 2050, the majority of the 50 million to one billion climate refugees should be mostly African. Finally, the dams of the continent will have significant overcapacity, as is already the case in Kenya.

8. A shortage of water due to global warming, desertification, over-exploitation of available resources (irrigation),

deforestation and very fragile groundwater. So although Africa covers 22 per cent of the land mass of the world, it would have only 9 per cent of renewable water supplies. By 2020, according to the IPCC, between 75 and 250 million Africans should be subject to increased water stress. If we consider the Sahel region, which is particularly threatened, the surface of Lake Chad has already decreased by 90 per cent since 1960. In such circumstances, the sharing of water will become a burning political issue. [55]

9. Accelerated deforestation - 4 million hectares between 2000 and 2010, nearly one third of global deforestation according to the FAO - which reduces rainfall, increases runoff and soil erosion, leads to flooding and landslides, disturbs the water cycle (since tree roots facilitate infiltration and storage underground), worsens the pollution of rivers (reduced filtering and fixing of toxic substances), reduces biodiversity (destruction of many ecosystems, decrease in the level of ambient humidity) and accelerates global warming (20 per cent contribution to the increase in greenhouse gas emissions).

10. A collapse of fishery resources in a context where artisanal fishing is the object of increasingly brutal competition from the major industrial nations. Indeed, African states cruelly lack the political and technical (aircraft, ships, etc.) means to oppose the illegal exploitation of their waters. And as if that were not enough, Europe dumps increasing quantities of toxic waste off the African coast. It is, moreover, these developments that largely explain the rise of piracy, especially off the coast of Somalia, but also the support it enjoys among coastal populations. Finally, this threat in turn justifies the increased military control of these maritime routes by the Western powers.

## New potential for resistance

Is Africa being handed over bound and gagged to this new imperialist offensive? This idea is what often leads to having an extremely pessimist vision of the continent. Some people argue today that African societies have been so much exploited and abused that the internal springs of their resistance have been broken, and that they no longer have the capacity to fight back, a posture that is the exact mirror image of the thirdworldism of the 1960s and 70s, which expected from the asymmetric struggles of the peoples of the South the redemption of western socialism. The reality is probably more complex, for three reasons:

1) The lasting economic growth of the continent, although it is highly polarized and unequal on the triple regional, social, and urban-rural levels, creates significant growth of commercial relations, of wage labour, and therefore of class polarization. Whether due to the exhaustion of profitable opportunities, to a minimum of caution by those at the top of society or to stubborn resistance by those below, there is however a slowing down of privatizations [56], some wage increases, especially in public service [57], the maintaining of subsidies, albeit residual, on basic commodities, and a new dynamic of indebtedness, especially with respect to China [58], etc. Some observers now believe that the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) have gone too far in dismantling social employment. In any cases, the Védrine Report notes an "increase in public protest," even though he prefers to see it as a sign of the progress of a "democratic culture". [59]

The National Federation of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), which is growing steadily, and now claims 340,000 members (out of a population of 50 million) recently held an extraordinary congress to call on the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) to break with the governing ANC, to denounce its neoliberal policies and the corruption of its leaders, but also to work towards the formation of a new class-struggle workers' party for the abolition of capitalism. Imagine for a moment that the approximately 120,000 members of the CGT and CFDT federations of metalworkers in France called on their respective confederations to denounce together the policies of François Hollande, to break with the "government left" and to work for the formation of an anti-capitalist workers' party ... the comparison is of course a bit rhetorical, but does it not show that the combined and uneven development of the African continent may still reserve some surprises (and perhaps also a few lessons) for European

anti-capitalists?

It is indeed at the very least one-sided to consider the changes in African societies through the prism of a Hobbesian model, where soaring inequality and the implosion of states will lead to generalized war of all against all, to the uncontrollable growth of rival gangs, to widespread barbarism on the model of the DRC and the CAR, which would prohibit the development of coherent, not to mention emancipatory, political options. Thus, in a neighbouring country, in Burkina Faso, the social mobilizations of the first quarter of 2011, after the death of a school student who was beaten to death by police, showed on the contrary a population that was able to act collectively in solidarity: boycott of the production of cotton by peasants, strikes by miners, teachers, and even magistrates, burning down of police stations, town halls and governors' offices, opening of prisons, mutinies in the army, etc. They even led to some partial victories and could lead this country, which has experienced significant student struggles, but also resistance to the introduction of GM grains and to privatization of railways, towards developments on a bigger scale in the medium term. [60]

For lack of space, I will not mention here the revival of trade union struggles in the Mauritian sugar industry [61]; the crippling strike by public sector workers in Botswana for wage increases (2011); the mass struggles of the Nigerian workers' movement, which has conducted several general strikes, including one in January 2012 against the sharp rise in gasoline prices; the efforts of the unions in Zimbabwe to organize the informal sector; movements against the cost of living in many countries, which led in Sudan to the revolt last autumn, inspired also by the revolutions of the Arab region, targeting the authoritarian and corrupt Islamist regime of Omar al-Bashir, which was bloodily repressed, following on the militant protests in the spring against the sale of farmland to Gulf investors ...

2) Half of Africa's population is under 25. This ought to make it possible, as the experts of the French Senate venture to say, to write a new page of this continent, which empowers its community traditions and continues to settle accounts with its colonial history. Moreover, they point out, urbanization generates "processes of individualization" that promote "new economic behaviour": the new generation born with television, the Internet and mobile phones "will not look at the world in the same way". Richard Benegas (political scientist at the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) goes further: for him, it "seeks less to remake the world that to find its place in it (...) Bill Gates fascinates it more than does Che Guevara". [62]

On the other hand, Maurice Engueleguele, programme coordinator of the Institute of African Governance, draws an opposite conclusion based on the experience of the Arab region: "The reversal of the age pyramids, the high rate of school enrollment, coupled with the large number of unemployed or under-employed graduates and with increasing inequality, are generating socio-political movements." The average level of education has indeed increased significantly: 42 per cent of 20-24 year olds now have a secondary education; in 2030, they are predicted to be 59 per cent (or 137 million, to which must be added 12 million graduates of higher education). And this at a time when the dismantling of the public sector, imposed by the Structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s and 90s, has further aggravated the unemployment of young graduates [63]? The "movement "Enough is enough!"(YEM), which put contestation in the forefront of the Senegalese media scene in 2012, bears witness to these two contradictory developments. It is up to the revolutionary left to promote the second by contributing to the political radicalization of these movements.

3) The new "scramble for Africa" is explained by the returns on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), which are higher than elsewhere (9.3 per cent in 2011, against 7.2 per cent for the world as a whole [64]). For this reason, it leads to increased competition from a growing number of outside interests - of course the Western powers (USA, Canada, France, England, Germany, Italy, Japan, Australia, Israel, Korea ...) but also the emerging countries (China, India, Brazil, Turkey, the Gulf states, Malaysia, Russia, etc.). Not to mention North Africa and South Africa, which export and invest in the rest of the continent. In this more and more tense competitive environment, the Western powers, despite their own rivalries, point to the dramatic progress of China, which is winning an increasing number of tenders, such as the vast project of Nairobi Airport (where France had to admit defeat), the modernization of Ethiopia's

telecommunications, the megaproject of the port of Bagamoyo (Tanzania), etc. The Middle Kingdom is also active in the media (newspapers, radio, satellite television), as well as in the building of schools and hospitals (sometimes carried out as aid). It is even beginning to delocalize some industrial activities.

China and the United States are engaged in a real "strategic game". The former offered a futuristic building, eighteen stories of glass and steel, to the AU for its headquarters in Addis Ababa, valued at \$200 million, and announced a plan to invest \$20 billion in 2013 -15, while the latter, in the aftermath of the "Doing Business in Africa" campaign, launched by Obama in November 2012, committed itself to spending \$7 billion over five years, which should attract \$9 billion of private capital, for electrification in sub-Saharan Africa. [65] After its failure in Mali, Washington is still looking for a country in which to establish the command of AFRICOM (perhaps Senegal?). The British are also on the way to increasing their influence in Africa: David Cameron has decided to designate "trade envoys" in Africa, vested with broad powers.

Seen from Africa, the growing class polarization, the accelerated social change and the strengthening of inter-imperialist competition may open the door to a balance of forces less unfavourable than in the 1980s and 90s, which would make it possible to demand a higher share of the rents and an increase in national value added. But for whose benefit? On the one hand, the continuing upward movement of macroeconomic indicators in an ideological context marked by the growing influence of China is leading some sectors of the African bourgeoisies to look towards Beijing and its economic success, contributing to the questioning of the "dogma of economic disengagement of the state" [66], without considering, quite to the contrary, abandoning a productivist, authoritarian and highly unequal model. At the same time, the continent is going towards social explosions, whose outcome will depend on the capacity of the political and trade-union left and of social movements to defend their own perspectives, breaking with social-liberal illusions, perspectives which tend towards a break with capitalism. From this point of view, the wave of contestation that has shaken North Africa since the end of 2010, and which shows no lasting signs of exhaustion, but also the political radicalization of a powerful class-struggle trade union sector in South Africa, is good news.

## Break with neo-colonial paternalism

From this side of the Mediterranean, there will be no progress of internationalist solidarity with the popular struggles, the movements and the political forces that resist the social and ecological effects of imperialist domination in Africa, without a break from the history of the Western left, and therefore without a critical review of the complicity of the European Enlightenment with the slave trade, but especially of the workers' movement with colonialism, neo-colonialism and the racist immigration policies that accompany them. We never recall sufficiently that neither the Popular Front nor the National Council of the Resistance included in their programme the independence of the colonies. This historical review has nothing to do with atonement for so-called Western guilt: the Western proletariat and the colonial peoples have in reality the same enemies.

To take just a few examples, let us recall that in the seventeenth century, the first plantation slaves in North America were, in greater numbers than the Africans, European victims of the criminal treatment of poverty at the time of primitive accumulation [67]; that the Versailles officers who massacred more than 20,000 Communards had learned "their trade" at the head of the "Bat d'Af" (French forces in Africa); that Nazi barbarism that was inspired by the colonial "heart of darkness" before developing its genocidal policies in Eastern Europe and Russia, as Simone Weil (the philosopher), Aimé Césaire and Hannah Arendt have shown convincingly; the paratroop officer Paul Aussaresses, specialist in torture and death squads in Algeria, transmitted his experience to the specialists of Fort Bragg in the USA, who would put it into practice in Vietnam (Operation Phoenix), as well as to those of the Manaus Centre (Brazil), which trained the secret police of the South American dictatorships; that structural adjustment programs were decided first in Africa, Asia and Latin America in the 1980s and 90s, before being "exported" to southern Europe today.



As concerns the circulation of imperialist practices between the North and the South, the recent history of France is instructive. After the Liberation, a number of cadres of the Vichy regime – of its police apparatus in particular - were transferred to Africa to continue their dirty work in the perspective of a controlled "decolonization". With poetic justice, in April 1961, the leaders of the French army in Algeria, organized in the OAS, tried a *pronunciamento* (as de Gaulle put it) against the political authorities of the metropolis; six months later, on October 17, it was the police prefect of Paris, Maurice Papon, a war criminal under the Occupation, recycled by the Gaullists, who repressed a demonstration of the FLN in Paris, at the cost of at least several dozen deaths. Just recently, in a sign of the continuity of the relationship between the far right and troops overseas, a group of paratroopers operating in the CAR could wear Nazi insignia on their uniforms without eliciting any reaction from their superiors before the scandal broke publicly. [68]

Over and above these necessary reminders, the left of the dominant countries must work to formulate an unambiguously anti-imperialist programme, even though it may seem still largely propagandist. In this sense, should we not defend more consistently the idea that, to save the vast majority of humanity from increasing misery, it is urgent to break with capitalism? In fact, the present crisis of globalization combines at least four dimensions that necessitate overall responses: first of all economic, since the relative accumulation of capital and its quest for increased profitability leads to the increasing export of capital ; which can go along with the acceptance of profits deferred over time [69]; social, mainly due to the return on a large scale of accumulation by dispossession, which leads to a massive increase of migration; ecological, due to the acceleration of global warming and the increasing shortage of natural resources, resulting from the runaway productivist model and its "extractive" component; lastly, political, given the accelerated loss of control of those below and the increased power of those at the top over the major economic and social choices of the planet, but also the growing rivalry between those at the top, which can fuel political and even military conflict.

How can we develop class responses to these four dimensions of the crisis, showing that the interests of the overwhelming majority of humanity - also essential to the maintenance of evolved forms of life - are antagonistic to those of the ruling classes, and that this antagonism takes place on a global scale? Such a programme is not conceivable without challenging private ownership of the means of production (natural resources and technical means), distribution and credit, especially because it allows a small minority to decide at its discretion on how they are used. That is the main reason why the people of the world have a shared interest in breaking with capitalism and the imperialist domination that it supports. This thinking is certainly not new: all the more reason to be surprised that it is not usually invoked in current debates on neo-colonialism and unequal development, whereas it has recently found a renewed audience, on the left of political ecology, among authors who do not refer directly to ecosocialism [70]. In reality, the implosion of the USSR and the conversion of China to capitalism are largely responsible for this paradox. Moreover, as several Marxist authors have noted since Rosa Luxemburg, with imperialism, the generalization of capitalist accumulation by the exploitation of wage labour is combined on a world scale with the pursuit of primitive accumulation, particularly by colonial and neo-colonial violence. More recently, since the mid-1970s, the crisis of "central" capitalism has also helped to the relaunching, on a larger scale, of what David Harvey calls "accumulation by dispossession" at the expense of small producers, but also of wage-earners of the "periphery", by accelerating the privatization of natural resources (land, forests, rivers, coastal waters, underground resources, etc.) and public enterprises, especially in Africa. [71] Such a regime of accumulation has in turn fostered a massive increase in migration flows, insofar as it combines the uprooting of peoples living from subsistence agriculture and petty commodity production, with their accelerated migration, in particular through war, their crowding into vast slums and the employment of some of them in export-related sectors (agriculture, mining, industry, transportation, etc.).

From the perspective of Western anti-imperialists, our solidarity with these populations should begin by supporting their resistance to expropriation, too often directly linked to imperialist interests (land grabbing, hydroelectric projects, mineral exploration, wars for resources, etc.). It must continue with the denunciation of their working conditions in jobs that are for the most part informal, underpaid and dangerous, for production, services and sales, often for the benefit of foreign employers. Of course, the expropriation of tens of millions of African smallholders does not lead to the creation of a comparable number of jobs, even precarious, prompting the explosive growth in the numbers of the

proletariat "without warmth or hearth" who roam the countryside, offering their services to networks of smuggling, robbery or armed struggle, which sometimes take on the colours of an ethnic or sectarian creed, or who are crowded into shanty towns in search of some expedient to survive. The migration of some of them to another sub-Saharan country or even to North Africa, with the hope of reaching Europe, condemns them to suffer various forms of violence, including prolonged detention in countries bordering the Mediterranean, usually ordered by the EU, which deserve to be actively denounced.

The proliferation of tragedies that strike clandestine migrants, in particular off the coast of Lampedusa, is the direct result of actions taken by institutions such as Frontex, but also of the increasingly restrictive laws adopted by European states, with the backing of left parties. That is why positions that are taken at the end of the migratory chain against the most abject consequences of inhuman anti-migration policies, while encouraging the development and defending the inviolability of Fortress Europe, are at best ineffective. The criminalization of migrants, justified by the obsession with security and by racism is in fact the main form now taken by the war against "the plague of beggars", typical of the period from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, but also of periods of mass unemployment in Europe since the nineteenth century. It is only by supporting the struggle of migrants against their arbitrary detention and deportation, but also against the humiliations and the slave work that they are often compelled to do, and for the respect of their rights, that we will promote their association with trade-union organizations and social movements that are fighting against the dismantling of public services and social benefits, but also against property speculation and the exploitation of labour in the countries of the North. To refuse to make this a priority is to turn our backs on the centrality of the anti-imperialist struggle for the reconstruction of a proletarian class consciousness in the dominant countries.

In conclusion, this article starts from the premise that it is pointless to distinguish between the economic interests of the big private groups and the political power of the French state in Africa. Indeed, in a context where competition between exporters and investors throughout the world continues to sharpen, it is clear that Paris is trying to play a more aggressive role by mobilizing all its traditional strengths in Africa. Thus, since the backyard in decline has too often been used to prop up not very competitive capital, *Françafrique* should be transformed into the rear base of the CAC 40 companies in order to conquer new market shares in the "English-speaking" and "Portuguese-speaking" regions of the continent. It is therefore not a question of turning its back on the CFA zone, but of reinvesting its preferential rents in favour of a logic of expansion. In this context, the capacity of intervention of the French army in its former empire must be considered as a significant political asset, which may even give rise to significant economic returns, provided they apply it carefully, in a concerted international framework, in particular with the UN Security Council, the United States, the EU, the AU and the authorities of the region and the country concerned.

What I have called "the humanitarian daze" of the French left prevents it from seeing to what extent the "securing of fragile states" is now one of the strategic tasks of imperialism, at a moment when the different imperialisms are jostling to bleed Africa white. After all, did not the colonization of the late nineteenth century also have the stated purpose of providing the "black continent" with a stable political order, "favourable to the security of business", based on untrammelled exploitation of the continent's resources? Similarly, far from saving lives threatened by the collapse of government, the large-scale police operations, currently conducted or sponsored by the Western powers, are only preparing the ground for a more implacable exploitation of the continent, whose human and environmental consequences could turn out to be even more deadly than the previous "scramble for Africa."

*January 15, 2014*

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[1] Claude Gabriel, "Centrafrique, un domino de plus" *Europe solidaire sans frontières* (ESSF: [www.europe-solidaire.org](http://www.europe-solidaire.org)), December 12, 2013.

[2] This term denotes the overlapping links and forms of neocolonial domination between France and its former African colonies

[3] In Africa, the IMF identifies four categories of states: oil states (Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Gabon), middle income states (Senegal), low income states (Benin, Burkina Faso, Madagascar, Mali, Niger), and fragile states (CAR, Ivory Coast, Guinea, DRC, Togo), to mention only the French-speaking countries. See also Colette Braekman, "Centrafrique en quelques questions," *Le Soir*, 28 December 2013.

[4] Jeanny Lorgeoux et al., "Sur la présence de la France dans une Afrique convoitée", Report of a working group of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces of the Senate, No. 103, October 29, 2013, p. 481.

[5] Julliard and H. Liffra, "Balkany, le conseiller Afrique (au noir) de l'Élysée", *Le Canard Enchaîné*, February 3, 2010.

[6] The Védrine Report uses this term, abusively conjugating it in the past tense. (Vedrine et al, "Un partenariat pour l'avenir: 15 propositions pour une nouvelle dynamique économique entre l'Afrique et la France", Report to the Ministry of Economy and Finance, December 2013, p. 16).

[7] This Commission also particularly financed the report of the Sahel Working Group, by Jean-Pierre Chevènement et al., July 3, 2013, 193 p.]. "On the presence of France in an Africa that is much sought after" (501 p.); the Information Report of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly on November 6, 2013 on "The English-speaking emerging African countries" (171 p.); the report to the Minister of Economy and Finance in December 2013, entitled "A Partnership for the Future: 15 proposals for a new economic dynamic between Africa and France" (166 p.). The last of the three explains things very clearly: "The French state must put at the heart of its economic policy support for the business relations of the private sector and take full responsibility for the existence of its interests on the African continent," at the same time stressing that these interests have become more important, especially for the principal groups with global reach, in the English- and Portuguese-speaking countries of the continent. [[Védrine et al. "Un partenariat...", p. 18-19.

[8] Credit Suisse, *Africa: The Commodity Warrant*, New Perspectives Series, 14 April, 2008, 108 p., released by [WikiLeaks](#).

[9] Védrine et al. "Un partenariat ...", p. 84.

[10] In 2015, Africa is expected to produce 78 per cent of the world's platinum, 60 per cent of cobalt, 57 per cent of manganese and diamonds, 34 per cent of palladium, 22 per cent of gold and uranium, 15 per cent of bauxite, 9 per cent of copper and 7 per cent of zinc (Credit Suisse, "Africa ..." p. 41). It possesses 89 per cent of known reserves of platinum, 81 per cent of chromium, 61 per cent of manganese and 60 per cent of cobalt (Jeanny Lorgeoux et al., "Sur la présence...", p. 57).

[11] For arable land, see Credit Suisse, "Africa ...", p. 69.

[12] UNCTAD, World Investment Report 2013, p. xvii.

[13] Védrine et al. "Un partenariat ...", p. 23;. Jeanny Lorgeoux et al, "Sur la présence ... À», p.31.

[14] This relatively poor business performance did not prevent the doubling of French exports to sub-Saharan Africa, between 2000-02 and 2009-11.

[15] Védrine et al. "Un partenariat ...", p. 63.

[16] To mention only the most significant examples, the Areva group, BNP Paribas, Bouygues, Eiffage, Eramet, Orange, Ponticelli Brothers, Société Générale, Vinci, etc., have a strong presence in the CFA zone.

[17] Alstom, Bolloré, BRL Ingénierie, Lafarge, L'Oréal, Sanofi, Schneider Electric, Technip, Thalès and Total have a strong presence outside the CFA zone (Védrine et al. "Un partenariat" ..., p. 69).

[18] My calculations, based on Védrine et al, "Un partenariat ...", p. 60.

[19] Védrine et al. "Un partenariat ...", p. 139.

[20] In the framework of the current renegotiations, "several NGOs - including Oxfam, supported by its local partner, the Network of Organizations for Transparency and Budget Analysis (Rotab) - suspect that President [of Niger] Mahamadou Issoufou, former General Secretary of the Société des mines du Niger (Somaŀr), one of the local affiliates of Areva, was too favourable to the French group (*La Lettre du Continent*, No. 673, Dec. 31, 2013)."

[21] Védrine et al. "Un partenariat...", p. 128 & 144.

[22] The continuity of the acronym CFA, from "Franc of the French colonies of Africa" (1945) to "Franc of the African Financial Community" (in West Africa) and "Franc for financial cooperation in Central Africa" (in Equatorial Africa), after independence, passing on the way through the "Franc of the French Community of Africa" (1958), speaks volumes about the postcolonial status of this currency. Piloted by the Bank of France and the Ministry of Economy and Finance of the former colonial power, meetings of finance ministers from the zone are held twice a year, alternately in Paris and in Africa.

[23] Similarly, the existence of a dense French banking network in the sub-region "is a good guarantee against political risks": thus, when the subsidiary of Société Générale was nationalized in Ivory Coast (in 2011), opening accounts in subsidiaries in neighbouring countries or in France was immediately proposed to "some of its major customers" (Védrine et al. "Un partenariat ...", p. 72).

[24] Védrine et al. "Un partenariat ...", p. 65.

[25] France has 800,000 immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa, including 100,000 Malians.

[26] In April 2013, these fine sentiments did not prevent France from denying a visa to the anti-globalization activist Aminata Traoré, invited to Paris by the NPA because of her criticism of Operation Serval. The ban has even been extended to the whole Schengen area

[27] Védrine et al. "Un partenariat...", pp. 21 & 138-9.

[28] Védrine et al. "Un partenariat...", p. 76; Jeanny Lorgeoux et al., "Sur la présence ...", p. 350.

[29] R. Granvaud, *Survie.org*, August 1 and November 13, 2013.

[30] "The FIDH and LDH ask the French Parliament to open an inquiry into the repression of the demonstrations of November 9 in Ivory Coast", November 30, 2004. ([Http://www.fidh.org](http://www.fidh.org) accessed January 10, 2012).

[31] For an enlightening historical account of the feats of arms of a marine commando of the COS who participated in many colonial and neo-colonial operations since its inception in 1947, see: "Forces Spéciales: le GCOS avec les marins de Lorient!" ([www.veterans-jobs-center.com](http://www.veterans-jobs-center.com), accessed January 10, 2014).

[32] His father, Renaud de Saint-Quentin, born in Morocco, former CEO of GEFCO (a subsidiary of PSA), was a career officer in the air force in Indochina, Suez and Algeria.

[33] Jeanny Lorgeoux et al., "Sur la présence ...", p. 338.

[34] The African Intervention Force should not be operational before 2015, so the last AU summit decided to develop more quickly an African Capacity for Immediate Responses to Crises (CARIC). For a sceptical point of view on these developments, see M. Plaut, "African Union Missing in Action", *The Guardian*, January 6, 2014.

[35] Jeanny Lorgeoux et al., "Sur la présence ...", p. 12.

[36] Thus the famous book of the Guyanese historian Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (London, Bogle-L'Ouverture

Publications, 1983) will shortly be translated into Chinese (*Pambazuka News*, No. 660, January 8, 2014).

[37] Jeanny Lorgeoux et al., "Sur la présence...", p.353.

[38] Védrine et al. "Un partenariat...", pp. 151-52.

[39] *Afroconcept New*, 26 November, 2013 ([www.afroconceptnews.com](http://www.afroconceptnews.com)); Michel Galy, *Le Monde*, December 4, 2013.

[40] Védrine et al., "Un partenariat...", p. 80.

[41] Kristin Ross, *May '68 and its Afterlives*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2002, pp. 167-69.

[42] In 1998, three years after the death of his father, he sold the Becob, in which he controlled 65% per cent of the capital, to Francois Pinault, who later sold this business to the British Wolseley company (Nicolas Beau and Olivier Toscer, *Une imposture française*, Paris, Les Arènes, 2006).

[43] Isabelle Chaperon, *Le Monde*, September 6, 2013.

[44] <http://npa2009.org/node/39626>

[45] <http://www.parti.de.gauche.fr/actua>

[46] <http://www.gauche-anticapitaliste>

[47] Lenin characterized the League of Nations as "an alliance of robbers " (Collected Works, Moscow, Progress Publishers, vol. 31, p. 323). What would he have said about the Security Council of the UN?

[48] Vincent Munié, "Une coopération militaire multiforme et contestée. En Centrafrique, stratégie française et enjeux régionaux", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, February, 2008.

[49] Albert Londres, *Terre d'ébène*, Paris, 1929 (Le Serpent À Plumes, 1998). See also André Gide, *Voyage au Congo*, Paris, 1927 (Folio-Gallimard, 1995).

[50] Raphael Nzabakomada-Yakoma *L'Afrique centrale insurgée. La guerre du Kongo-wara 1928-193*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1986. Martin Thomas, "An Empire in Revolt? The Rif War, the Syrian Rebellion, Yen Bay and the Kongo Wara", in: *The French Empire Between the Wars: Imperialism, Politics and Society*, Manchester UP, Manchester, New York (NY), 2005, pp. 211-244.

[51] For example, a country like Zambia is totally dependent on world copper prices.

[52] See Jean Nanga, "GDP, the bourgeoisie and inequality all growing", *International Viewpoint* 461, June 2013.

[53] Today, weapons of war are used to poach elephants, dooming these animals to disappear from the forests of Central Africa within ten years ( *Le Monde*, March 15, 2013).

[54] Bruno Losch, Sandrine Fréguin-Gresh, Eric White, *Structural Transformation and Rural Change Revisited: Challenges for Late Developing Countries in a Globalizing World*, Africa Development Forum series, World Bank, 2012, p. 2.

[55] The Renaissance Dam, on the Blue Nile in Ethiopia, at the frontier with Sudan, with a capacity twice that of the Aswan Dam, could have a disastrous environmental impact downstream on Sudan and Egypt.

[56] "The privatizations of state enterprises have gradually slowed, perhaps because the majority of profitable companies have been privatized"



(sic!) (Jeanny Lorgeoux et al., "Sur la présence ...", p. 90).

[57] It is true that they had been sharply reduced by the dismantling of labour regulations and the devaluations of the SAPs period.

[58] The rate of public sector debt had gone down from 100 per cent of GDP in 2001 to 28 per cent in 2008; it rose again, to 42 per cent in 2012 (Jeanny Lorgeoux et al., "Sur la présence ...", p. 89).

[59] Védrine et al. "Un partenariat...", p. 25.

[60] Lila Chouli, *Burkina Faso 2011. Chronique d'un mouvement social*, Tahin Party, Lyon, 2012.

[61] See on the ESSF site, <http://www.europe-solidaire.org> (Article 30850), "Economie et luttes sociales en Île Maurice."

[62] Jeanny Lorgeoux et al, "Sur la présence ...", pp.38, 42-44, 46;. Védrine et al., "Un partenariat...", P. 38.

[63] Jeanny Lorgeoux et al., "Sur la présence ...", p. 43.

[64] Jeanny Lorgeoux et al., "Sur la présence ...", p. 95.

[65] Védrine et al. "Un partenariat...", p. 49-50; Jeanny Lorgeoux et al., "Sur la présence ...", p. 26. The US General Electric company expects a double-digit growth of sales on the continent in the coming decade and is strengthening its presence in Africa. (J.-P. Rémy, *Le Monde*, January 1, 2013).

[66] See on the site of ESSF, [www.europe-solidaire.org](http://www.europe-solidaire.org) (article 30851), Jean Nanga, "Afrique subsaharienne, le mythe de la réussite".

[67] In 1671, Virginia had only 2,000 black slaves, as against 6,000 white convicts, who had been sentenced to temporary servitude.

[68] *Le Parisien*, December 22, 2013.

[69] See the concept of spatio-temporal fix, developed by David Harvey in *The New Imperialism*, Oxford University Press, 2003.

[70] See for example: Hervé Kempf, *Pour sauver la planète, sortir du capitalisme*, Seuil, 2009.

[71] That is why it is especially important today to support journalists and newspaper titles taken to court by the Bolloré group for having implicated its role, particularly in land grabbing.