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Chacun pour soi:
Africa and the French state 1958-1998
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“L’Afrique est le seul continent qui soit encore à la mesure de la France, à la portée de ses moyens. Le seul où elle peut, encore, avec 500 hommes, changer le cours de l’histoire”

-Louis de Guiringaud, 1979 (Bayart 1984: 53)

“Far from being victims of their very real vulnerability, African governments exploit, occasionally skillfully, the resources of a dependence which is, it cannot ever be sufficiently stressed, astutely fabricated as much as predetermined.”

-Jean-François Bayart (1993:26-27)

Introduction

In the early years of the Cold War, decolonization became a systemic imperative. Between 1948 and 1960 the old European colonial empires crumbled or fought guerilla wars to preserve their holdings, wars that they could never win. France, Britain, and lesser European powers faced mobilized colonial populations, an unfriendly international environment, and internal reform. The developments made colonialism untenable yet the French sought to maneuver and influence the situation dishonestly. In one sphere, francophone Africa, French politicians saw the opportunity to create a new international power position on the ruins of their old colonial status. Rather than establish conventional relationships with the new African states, the French state and the elites of its former African colonies created an unusual and familistic bloc.

This bloc constituted both a limited case for transnational relationships and an unusual assertion of systemic power by a European state. The relationship between France and francophone Africa highlights, in an unusually clear and extreme form, the difficulty of separating a former dominant power from its abandoned periphery—difficulties that warp the relationship between Russia and former Soviet states or the United States and Central America. Furthermore, even though the organizational form of French-African policy has determined much of its history, the French-African relationship reflects the positions of Africa and Europe—the peripheralization of much of Africa, and the slow end for France's attempts to maintain itself as a powerful state in a system of sovereign states.

This paper explores the relationship between the French state and francophone Africa since decolonization, rather than narrating the history of French-African policies (Domergue-Cloarec 1994; Wauthier 1995) or providing an introduction to the full range of cultural, social, and political relations

(Manning 1988; Chipman 1989; Andereggen 1994). The focus is on resource flows—which actors control resources and their allocation in the relationship. What determines resource flows between the states of francophone Africa and France? What are the strategies of the Africans and French actors involved in the relationship?

The answers turn on the dual nature of the state: as an autonomous and unitary actor in an international state system; and as a complex organization with all the failings, permeability, and other traits of such organization. A state might provide resources to another because an alliance is in the leaders' strategic designs; or a state might supply resources because people controlling resources at its lower administrative levels have their own reasons to do so.

To summarize the argument: For a time, France reconciled the two aspects by combining tight presidential control over African policy with an international strategy that used its African contacts to build status. The president could exercise firm control over French resources, and used it to fortify friendly leadership or to punish those who stepped out of line. This centralization and personalism made France almost a unitary actor, but at the price of conducting policy without institutions or accountability. African leaders responded by appealing to French strategic considerations and relying on alliance politics and appeals to French credibility to maintain French support. Such a situation was personally unstable for leaders who might find that Paris had judged them useless. The autonomy and power of the French state, combined with its interests in African consistency, made it a stabilizer of sorts.

However, in the 1980s the direction of the French state as an international actor increasingly called its attention from its old preoccupations to new ones that excluded Africa. All the while African *grandeur* became increasingly expensive and the economies of francophone states declined. The

French state as an actor in the interstate system turned away from Africa toward Europe yet the organization of the French state did not change accordingly. As a result African elites, relieved of the need to appeal to the French president's strategic designs, sought to secure resources through penetration of the French state. The web of interactions that had permitted the tightly-controlled French state to exercise such power tied it to relationships with people who had little strategic claim on its resources. The tension between the remaining degree of interaction and the shift of strategic priorities helps explain policy disasters such as French implication in the activities of the genocidal Rwandan regime of the early 1990s. As French policy became less coherent, its resources began to sabotage the regimes it supported, and French actions in Africa are most appropriately understood and periodized by the French president. French-African policy exists as an island of personalism and informality in an otherwise bureaucratic state and it should be treated separately. Much as political institutions shape politics and transform political pressures, the personalistic organization of French African policy transformed the meaning of international and economic events while shaping the course of events according to its own logic.

The next section describes, in abstract terms, the basic bargain struck by France and its former colonies in 1958. Section 2 describes the organizational form that bargain took under de Gaulle, Pompidou, and the first generation of francophone African leaders. Sections 3, 4, and 5 update the bargain through the subsequent presidencies. Giscard d'Estaing attempted to uphold and extend the model; the reasons for his difficulties highlight the pressures on the actors and the bargain. Mitterrand, after briefly experimenting with radical reform, gave up on Africa in general and on Giscard d'Estaing's earlier struggle to maintain presidential control and French autonomy. Section 6 comprises two cases

that show the consequences of the model's subsidence, in monetary policy and relations with Rwanda.

The devaluation of the CFA franc highlights how Africa has declined in French politics; French support for the Rwandan regime exemplifies the morass that policy becomes when left without presidential attention.

1 z The Bases of a Relationship

The relationship that developed between France and its former colonies after independence solved problems for both France and the elites of the new states. Strikingly, however, the interests of each side were very asymmetric. Each party gave up something that it could afford—France gave up some state revenues, African states lost many of their sovereign rights to choose their relationships and deal with other states as equals. Each party received something that mattered—France gained a position of international leadership and regional dominance, and African states expanded resources and support for their fragile regimes. The relationship’s geopolitical and economic aspects can be delineated in the form that they took at independence and which has conditioned French-African relations since. The actors and preoccupations shift in status and importance, but the conditions of the independence agreement partly explain the relationship’s commencement, resilience, and evolution.

Geopolitics

What was the geopolitical profile of the French-African relationship? First of all, African states had full juridical sovereignty and equal rights in international organizations (Jackson 1990; Clapham 1996). An African state was worth courting just for that and France sought such support. As an ambitious world power Paris had conflicts with critics in international organizations (especially over its colonial activities in the South Pacific).¹ A large block of UN votes could either forestall or reduce the

¹ French retention of possessions in the South Pacific and military activities in the region have prompted criticism since the 1950s, including a string of resolutions proposed in the UN and other international organizations. Preventing such criticism or minimizing its effects has been and remains a preoccupation of French diplomacy. French activities in the South Pacific bear, from the French perspective, some resemblances to French policy in Africa. In both cases an otherwise inexplicable involvement (indeed, the perpetuation of colonialism in the Pacific) allows France to become a dominant player in a region at relatively small expense. See Chesneaux and Maclellan (1992).

damage of criticism by the General Assembly; they also might be helpful in justifying a French presence on the Security Council. In the international system, French prestige gained appreciably from its leadership of a bloc of states outside the domination of the superpowers, and France had staked its international identity on this prestige and independence. Only the United States and Soviet Union could claim dominance over such a large number of states. France was not simply a middle-rank power; it was a leader.

Second, a field of action and a bloc were signs of French power. France's old stage as a great power—Europe—had been preempted by the superpowers, while its colonial empire dissolved. A regional hegemony, however, could redeem French claims. *Indépendance* and *grandeur* have long been twin themes of French foreign policy (Flynn 1995). France was to determine its own policy and to play a role in major issues; such was, for de Gaulle, its place among nations (Gordon 1993).

Grandeur could be attained by making millions of Africans in a dozen states adherents to a French bloc, while having a political field outside divided Europe gave France room to maneuver and act independently. French strategic thinkers—especially Gaullists—scarcely questioned these goals. France would preserve a *pré carré*, or a backyard, and dominance over that backyard would guarantee French power and freedom of action within its new circumstances.²

² Some writers (Martin 1985, 1989, 1995; also Reed 1987) regard uranium as the key variable in explaining French activities in Africa. This argument is too simple. Uranium mattered to France due to its strategic decision to gain privileged control over the mineral as part of its nuclear grand strategy, and while there are many uranium producers the ones in francophone Africa offered the greatest potential for security. The French interest in secure sources of uranium in Africa stemmed from efforts to play a role as a middle power with *grandeur* and *indépendance*. (it is a symbol of a policy based on “la bombe et l’Afrique”). In other words, uranium does not explain French involvement in Africa; de Gaulle and Gaullism explain both.

Economics

There is no obvious economic complementarity between France and Africa to explain the relationship. The economies of France and the francophone states, taken as aggregates, do not fit well together and would not obviously make alliances for mutual economic gain (Marseille 1984; Chipman 1989:186-192; Chafer 1992; Coquet, Daniel, and Fourmann 1993). A poor fit does not, however, mean an absence of individual actors with niches. Many French firms, small companies as well as prominent large firms, had market positions built up under colonial trade regimes. Even if an economic rationale for their positions was difficult to discern, they sought to keep and expand them.

While some French people made considerable money out of the French-African relationship, the resources in the relationship were crucial to the African states and elites. The newly independent states lacked revenue bases, technical expertise and military security. The exact resources they gained from France varied. Military intervention has been a constant, from the exploits of mercenary Bob Denard to more orthodox French assistance and troop deployments (such deployments are generally along disputed borders, or in a capital where they might be politically useful) (Chipman 1989; Rouvez 1994). There has been extensive French tutelage, from French citizens serving in cabinets to teenage French *coopérants* doing their national service by teaching in Africa. The most prominent element of tutelage has been through the CFA franc, a currency arrangement for francophone Africa tied to the French franc and supported by France. Tutelage has declined steadily since independence, as nationalist and clientelistic pressures alike militate against the presence of foreigners in technical and political posts. Aid was considerable, preferentially directed towards the *pré carré* (Schraeder, Hook, and Taylor 1998), and commonly used for political purposes including basic support of the state as well

as the preservation of particular governments and leaders.

Rhetoric and familism

The familism of French-African relations and the oft-proclaimed French-African solidarity have been the subject of much anglophone commentary on the relationship (for a short history see Chipman 1989). Commentators ascribe considerable causal force to it (Golan 1981) or put it down as hypocrisy (Martin 1985, 1995). Nevertheless, its actual effect on the conduct of relations and the flow of resources is difficult to see. African affairs certainly can and often do arouse considerable emotion in French politics, and French policy is inevitably conducted with much personal interaction and discussion of complementary vocations. There is little doubt that a tradition and rhetoric of French-African relations helps justify deep French engagement in Africa, but the times it is invoked, its effects, and the actors who invoke it are difficult to predict based on rhetoric alone. Uganda was a participant at the Franco-African summit before it became perceived as an *anglophone* enemy state in the Rwandan collapse. The rhetoric of the relationship serves more to obscure than to explain patterns of resource allocation and power. It has scarcely changed, while much else has.

2 z *The Gaullist Model*

Thus, Africa and France had potentially complementary assets. At decolonization France sought superpower status, *grandeur* and *indépendance*, on African foundations. French-linked African elites, preoccupied with establishing themselves and their states rather than establishing an independent international voice, could avail themselves of French assistance by joining the French strategic project. Nevertheless, that this potential for a bargain could be developed into a strong relationship, and the form that this relationship took, is attributable, in large part, to Charles de Gaulle, France's president in

1958, and the first generation of francophone African leaders such as Senghor of Senegal, Houphouët-Boigny of Côte d'Ivoire, Sekou Touré of Guinea, and Léon M'ba of Gabon (Bourgi 1980; Lavroff 1980; Chipman 1989; Wauthier 1995). With the exception of Touré, they established the pseudo-bargain and gave it a peculiar organizational status within the French state that would later prove very important.

On the African side, all but Touré had experience with French politics and considerable loyalty to France. Gabonese leader M'ba, some evidence implies, actually tried to prevent Gabonese independence, preferring to lobby for status as an overseas territory of France (Péan 1983:40-42). On the French side, de Gaulle believed in the possibilities for France in Africa. As one commentator remarks, he had a foreign policy based on “axé sur la bombe et l’Afrique”—based on nuclear weapons and African *grandeur* (Marchesin 1997:532). The old French Equatorial Africa was the base of the French resistance movement, The Free French, during the first years of World War II and de Gaulle had great affection towards Africa (Wauthier 1995:19). De Gaulle came to see decolonization as inevitable (Lacouture 1991:198-302) and he sought to establish the support of as well as French dominance over francophone Africa. France and the newly independent states did not set about establishing “normal” diplomatic relationships, or even international organizations (as the British did with the Commonwealth). The exception was Guinea; Touré and France had an acrimonious separation and remained hostile for several years.³ In essence, Franco-African relations formed a bargain between the French state and the men who rapidly came to dominate the elites of their states. And the French state

³ Niger almost voted for immediate independence, and a major nationalist was campaigning for it. Fearful of French reactions, other members of the colony’s elite mobilized to prevent an independence vote and narrowly succeeded.

in this context took on an odd meaning.

French-African policy under the Gaullist model gave the French president great autonomy and influence in Africa, made French foreign policy goals important in determining policy toward Africa, built strong personalistic links with heads of state, and lasted (albeit while decaying) through the terms of Pompidou and Giscard d'Estaing. The distinguishing characteristic of the Gaullist model was the degree to which African policy was an island of power without institutional control, and centralized in the president's office. This gave French policy in Africa the rare distinction of having uncontested, unilateral decision-making powers, a unity generally ascribed to states, since policy in Africa was effectively subservient to one individual.

The preconditions for such a policy existed, in part, in the functioning of the French state (Elgie and Machin 1991). The constitution of the French Fifth Republic, written largely for de Gaulle in 1958, created a presidentialist system with the directly-elected president as the head of state with responsibility for policy in times of national emergencies, many ceremonial duties, a very small staff, and few constitutionally-reserved areas of policy (Hayward 1993). The powers of the president, however, can run far beyond their juridical definition (Suleiman 1994). Presidents, as leaders of parties, generally control the prime minister—*cohabitation*, or divided governance, is discouraged by electoral sequences. They can also intervene effectively in ministries that interest them, and have traditionally reserved some areas for themselves such as defense and some foreign policies. One such area is Africa. The small presidential staff, the *cellule africaine*, with around fifty employees, included approximately seven employees of the Africa unit, and housed on a street next to the president's Élysée palace. The extent of presidential control over African policymaking is remarkable, as is its insulation from normal

channels of French politics; it seems immune from transparency mechanisms and accountability. It is this institutional peculiarity—an empire within the state—that may account for the minimal attention that students of French foreign policy give to its African affairs.

Presidential power was reinforced by the condition of the French party system early in the Fifth Republic. De Gaulle founded the party which controlled the legislature during his presidencies, and the prime minister took on a delegated function of administering the government, acting as a potential scapegoat, and attending to policy areas which did not interest de Gaulle. In areas of interest, the president could override a prime minister of his own party, or establish direct contacts with the relevant minister to make policy. The prime minister occupied a post constricted largely by the intentions of the president. De Gaulle, in short, was the first “hyperpresidential” French leader (Elgie and Machin 1991).

African affairs were firmly relegated to the presidential unit and the presence of Jacques Foccart cemented the relationships (Foccart 1990; Péan 1990). This *eminence grise* of the president’s staff met with de Gaulle daily, maintained networks of informants, cultivated more networks with the assistance of the French secret services as well as mercenaries, and dealt with the unofficial paramilitaries such as the Service d’Action Civique (SAC). Thus, policy throughout the government was centralized in the president’s establishment, and the presence of an advisor as well-informed as Foccart in constant contact with the president meant that lower-level state employees generally had no need to make policy in the breach.

Dealing with France

How did relationships work under this model? The Gaullist model was risky for individual

members of elites in the states of the *pré carré*. France, which could not as a practical matter impose new governing elites on the whole of a francophone state, could act decisively against an individual government or regime. Additionally, the depth of interaction between France and its former colonies meant that France could expect to retain significant contacts with any new regime. This is in contrast to, for example, the Soviets whose presence in Africa depended on their relations with the state executive and who risked being expelled after a change in personnel in the executive (Clapham 1996:142-150).

The target of African political elites seeking resources from France was thus the French president himself. The capacity of information channels within the president's African unit, the relative dominance of de Gaulle and Gaullists in African affairs, and the time dedicated to Africa by de Gaulle and Pompidou, as well as the competency of Foccart, meant that it was fruitless for leaders to seek to incorporate lesser French officials into their networks or play off French political leaders against each other for support. While recourse to private resources was possible, it was severely limited by the small number and mutual observation of the *messieurs Afrique*, and the tight control that the presidency could exercise over business dealings of French companies involved on the continent. The links between French companies and the French state were not only due to traditional French business-state relations. Many French firms in Africa, especially the former colonial monopoly trading houses, or *comptoirs*,⁴ and the resource-extraction firms needed a secure legal status (Assidon 1989) that was best maintained by developing close relations of reciprocity with the French president, who was a more

⁴A synecdoche for the interests of some of the French is *comptoirs*, firms dating to the colonial era which merely act as intermediaries. They continue to exist despite economic conditions theoretically hostile to them; they exist largely due to their extensive networks in Africa and France, which can assist them with policies ranging from monopolies or regulatory derogations (Assidon, 1989).

certain bet than a leader of a francophone state. The president was thus able to prevent or encourage almost any private transaction of any size.

Quite often, a given firm's transaction had no particular relevance to the president's strategic design. The large numbers of French firms entrenched in Africa, however, created a nonstrategic use for French power. The conditions of their involvement, usually dating back to colonialism, and of French involvement facilitated their integration into policy and their claim on French state assistance. Their involvement since independence has frequently been due to regulatory or procurement advantages which required that they have political leverage within the African states, and the French state has just such leverage. A working assumption developed that France would use its leverage to promote the interests of French firms and businessmen of any size. Since French involvement in the *pré carré* included a commitment to French economic dominance, there was no conflict between the state helping French firms make money in Africa and the overall strategic project of using Africa as a base for power. And neither project in turn conflicted with the overall illogic of French economic hegemony in west and central Africa. Instead, the degree of French involvement created a host of dependent French businessmen whose livelihoods were contingent upon their ability to persuade French state employees that their interests should be promoted.

The centralization of French decision making and the power of the president thus conditioned relations. The situation demanded that African leaders tailor their requests for resources to the priorities of the French president. Under de Gaulle, Pompidou, and Giscard d'Estaing, the concerns of the president were largely strategic and dedicated to maintaining the autonomy and depth of French power in the francophone states. This priority, in turn, required that France maintain its credibility as an ally. It

needed to demonstrate that France would uphold the territorial integrity of the francophone states, and that France would support the elites, if not the leaders, in command of the states. In short, France needed to be a predictable military patron; the moral economy of African international relations required a measure of reciprocity. African elites and heads of state could threaten France's image as a satisfactory patron and thereby elicit French support. This use of credibility had limits, primarily economic ones. It was more difficult to protest French abandonment in military conflicts than a decrease in budgetary subventions.

Culture and international relations here are intertwined: French leadership status, like any leadership status, was dependent upon the assent of those France led. By threatening to withdraw their assent, African states imperiled the French sense of leadership that, intimately linked with *indépendance* and *grandeur*, was the basis of French grand strategy. Every francophone state, no matter how pro-French, did occasionally defect on a United Nations vote or accept the opening of a Soviet embassy. Nonetheless, the result of French policy was that it minimized institutional continuity and maximized presidential power and discretion. This policy was highly conducive to the pursuit of strategic adventure and action rather than inertia and diffusion of static bureaucracy.

3 z *Personalism and administrative decay 1974-1981*

The Gaullist system was inherently unstable. It depended on an almost symbiotic relationship between the president and African elites, which would not easily sustain shifts in the constellation of actors. It depended, given its remarkable personalism, on the energies and competencies of the president and his *cellule africaine* to maintain control over a policy which always faced strong centrifugal tendencies. It brought a host of dubious characters into channels of power and thereby built

in strong temptations to worsening corruption. The energies of President Giscard d'Estaing, in office from 1974-1981, managed to hold the system in place but by the time of Mitterrand's death in 1995, the Gaullist system was gone.

Administrative decay in France and Africa

The jolt of moving from rule by de Gaulle unsettled the linked networks of business interests, military men, secret services, and heads of state that had centered on the president and his advisor, Foccart. Giscard d'Estaing was different, and that alone constituted a problem. The new president began his term by firing Foccart and hiring his own advisor, René Journiac. Despite his long political experience and choice of a Foccart lieutenant as his African advisor, Giscard d'Estaing belonged to a different political family and occupied different networks than the Gaullists. Not every *monsieur Afrique* had cultivated strong ties with Journiac and the hierarchy of access to presidential policy was thus shuffled merely by the personnel change. Despite being let go, Foccart remained active. Networks between France and francophone Africa had remained from the colonial era, and expanded with economic growth, but the privatization of Foccart constituted a significant loss of presidential control over circuits of power. In addition the new presidential networks, by no means insignificant, changed the relative access of individuals to resources and the attention of the president.

The presidency of Giscard d'Estaing was still a hyperpresidential one (Keeler and Schain 1996), in which the president could dominate his favorite policy sectors (Prime Minister Jacques Chirac, unhappy with presidentially-imposed policies in several sectors, resigned after two years and was replaced by the more compliant Raymond Barré). Giscard d'Estaing's downgrading of African advisor's title was largely a sign of his personal involvement in Africa. In a model of policy formulation

which largely relied on the interest and determination of one individual—the president—Giscard d’Estaing showed great interest in Africa and willingness to devote time to making policy towards the continent. His innovation was to personalize it yet further, combining the roles of the president and his advisor into one.

Meanwhile, the states of francophone Africa were suffering from the political and economic decay that made the 1970s such a disastrous decade for the entire continent. Battered by the oil crises and declining prices for many commodities, their political economies began to crumble. As growth slowed and the neopatrimonial political economies dissolved state capacity, the elites who garnered support and power from their patronage networks began to face increasing difficulty in procuring resources (Lemarchand 1988; Boone 1992; Bayart 1993:21-30).⁵ By gaining resources from outside francophone Africa, through aid as well as currency manipulation, elites strengthened their relations with outside powers. Despite the CFA being inoculated against the worst forms of corruption, it sustained a thriving black market. To rule, increasingly, was to manipulate external resource flows. Some of the individuals who came to power in these failing states proved unsatisfactory allies and, yet, good at such manipulation.

Giscard d’Estaing’s career in Africa

Giscard d’Estaing’s activism foundered in increasingly serious problems that arose for three

⁵ One example of the increasing scarcity of resources and privatization of the state is the increasing pressure to remove tutelage; gains from efficiency fall prey not only to national feeling but also to the need for further positions and prebends with which to maintain patronage networks, a subtext in discussions of Africanization efforts (Boone, 1992: 177-179); Guth, 1991)

reasons, two of them deriving from the economic and political decay of francophone states. First, in matters of grand strategy, Giscard d'Estaing sought to increase the number of states in the *pré carré* while maintaining the position of France (Bach 1985). Rwanda, Burundi, the lusophone states, Equatorial Guinea and, most prominently, Mobutu's Zaire all developed close relations with France. By virtue of the attention from Paris, these states gained the ability to call upon French support against external or internal threats and the ability to gain French support by threatening to abandon France for another ally.⁶ In geopolitical terms, the expansion of the French field of influence, including reconciliations with radical states (such as Mali and Guinea) and French involvement in other states, increased the chances that French allies would be threatened or that a new ally would toy with France.

It was thus half of the reason that the opposition socialists castigated Giscard d'Estaing as a "pyromaniac fireman" (*pompier pyromane*). As more regimes could call on France as a benefactor, the more often they could demand assistance of some sort from France. The other half of the socialist critique was the second reason for Giscard d'Estaing's difficulties: his activism in Africa. Giscard d'Estaing deepened as well as broadened French involvement, taking an increasing personal interest in details of the different regimes. He faced increasing difficulty in maintaining a French stabilizing function in Africa as instability grew in francophone countries, and French interventions under his rule became increasingly heavy-handed and unpopular.

Third, independently of Giscard d'Estaing's intentions, the crises in Chad threatened French

⁶ Mobutu's links with France were less than a year old when French paratroopers first intervened in Shaba province (in 1977) to prop up his rule; Giscard d'Estaing was eager to prove his fidelity to the new ally, and Mobutu thereby gained the ability to call upon France in the future and question its credibility should it fail him (Willame 1995).

credibility as it had not yet been threatened. Chad's conflict during Giscard d'Estaing tenure was the most impressive example of how the need to preserve its credibility as a patron could deprive France of most volition. Only one outcome would not damage French credibility across Africa: the establishment of a pro-French regime in a unified Chad. Thus, the ongoing French engagement in Chad could not end without Libyan agreement (Lemarchand 1991). In response, France maintained troops in Chad and, responding to Libyan actions, repeatedly upgraded its military expedition's equipment (Chipman 1989). It also dealt kindly with regimes which promised to assist it with its efforts to defend its credibility in Chad, most prominently Zaire (Willame 1995).

The challenges of Giscard d'Estaing: Bokassa

The Central African Republic was an extreme example of a regime that was a good client but otherwise disastrous (for sources see Péan 1977; Wauthier 1995; O'Toole 1997). It had never been a successful polyarchy and a former French soldier named Jean-Bedel Bokassa had seized its presidency in 1965 during a French-assisted coup which went wrong. The coup's orchestrators had intended to put a different individual in power. Bokassa's remarkable combination of buffoonery, brutality, and demonstrative pro-French gestures proved embarrassing to France. For example, in 1969, he showed up during the early hours in battle dress at the French embassy in Bangui, declaring his willingness to march his army to Paris and rescue de Gaulle from the students of Nanterre. Nevertheless, at times he would ostentatiously seek other allies, and even denounce France. At those times Giscard d'Estaing would rush to assure himself of Bokassa's support, for the Soviets (if not other powers) would probably have obliged Bokassa should he have opted to change his friends in developed countries. Bokassa controlled the country's two diamond mines and the long border with the perpetually

worrisome Chad, making him appealing to the superpowers. To cement the French relationship during better times, Bokassa gave extravagant gifts of diamonds to Giscard d'Estaing's family and money to his political party. He also entered into contracts for mining with the French president's associates as well as providing more acceptable forms of support, such as loud agreement with French policy. France reciprocated by funding white elephants such as a television station for a country where half of the televisions were in the presidential palace and, more importantly, training and supplies for Bokassa's security apparatus.

It was Giscard d'Estaing's misfortune that Bokassa became intolerable during his presidency; Bokassa acted erratically, personally murdering school children, and crowning himself emperor with a garish coronation partly funded by the Ministry of Cooperation with regal equipment purchased from French firms. Finally in 1979, with the connivance of the French secret service and French military officers in the country, Bokassa was overthrown in Operation Barracuda. French radio accidentally announced the coup's success several hours early, and it was a French military airplane which delivered the new president, the same David Dacko originally deposed by Bokassa, to Bangui. Bokassa flew to exile in France. He was a French citizen with a military pension and became the proprietor of a bar in suburban Paris; it was only with considerable difficulty that the French government transferred him to exile in Côte d'Ivoire.

Once he arrived in Côte d'Ivoire, Houphouët-Boigny added Bokassa's exile to his repertoire of bargaining tools. To express any displeasure he felt towards France, the Ivoirian president would permit the embarrassing ex-dictator to give interviews about his close relationship with the sitting French president. Meanwhile in Bokassa's former empire journalists investigating the imperial palace accused

him of vile practices, such as cannibalism. This press attention did not help Giscard d'Estaing in his efforts to distance himself from Bokassa. Neither the close relationship of Giscard d'Estaing with Bokassa, nor the heavy-handed overthrow (later maligned as “the last colonial expedition” by Foccart) impressed the world or the French electorate (Foccart 1990:1:255). The incident probably played a significant role in Giscard d'Estaing's loss in the 1981 elections.

The challenges of Giscard d'Estaing: Bongo

One last example highlights the constraints of the French role in francophone Africa and the increasing importance of private networks linking francophone African elites and French state actors. Omar Bongo, the dictator of Gabon, was a significantly cannier and more stable individual than Bokassa, and successfully manipulated both French grand strategy and its personalistic forms (Péan 1983; Reed 1987). The *clan Gabonais*, probably the most successful of its ilk, was an assembly of Gabonese power elites, French business, military and intelligence figures, and an assortment of shady individuals with economic and other interests in the country. It included many members of Foccart's mysterious paramilitary SAC, for which Gabon was a main base. Over the clan presided Bongo; it was organized primarily through two Libreville Masonic lodges, and Bongo was grand master of one while dominating the other. In its continuous and tight relationship with the head of state and his predecessor, as well as its political effectiveness, the *clan Gabonais* marked a limiting case for close and personalistic relations. Giscard d'Estaing, an interloper as far as the Gaullist-dominated clan was concerned, learned this hard fact when he attempted to change the French ambassador to Gabon. Bongo preferred “his” ambassador, Maurice Robert. Giscard d'Estaing suggested several alternatives, but Robert was a Bongo loyalist and a keystone of the clan. The clan rallied around their leader

pressuring Giscard d'Estaing and his advisor Journiac. Bongo, meanwhile, complained to Giscard d'Estaing, impugned French loyalty to him, and, dangerously, made it clear that he would take his dependency elsewhere if not satisfied.

Giscard d'Estaing gave in, aware of the strategic consequences, loss of credibility, and loss of revenue to important French individuals and firms if Bongo enhanced his links with Washington or the Soviet Union. Robert remained in his post, now with the nickname “le Gabonais.” The efforts of Bongo and the clan to decide the French ambassadorship showed both methods of influence available to political extraversion-seeking elites. Gabon could have harmed influential French businesses (especially the oil company Elf) and deprived France of credibility as a useful and supportive ally, with consequences for French dealings with other “moderate” francophone states. Meanwhile, the clan applied its resources within France to make the stakes known. The straitjacket of credibility and the developing constraint of private networks with links within the French state now badly limited French margins of maneuver, even for an internally powerful and activist Africa-oriented president such as Giscard d'Estaing.

4 z *Mitterrand's first eighteen months: moralization*

Mitterrand entered office in 1981 amidst tremendous expectations (Favier and Martin-Roland 1990). Throngs of Parisians took to the streets to celebrate the election results on May 10. In Kinsasha, and other African capitals, citizens also danced, expecting significant changes in policy towards Africa, while in the *noyau dur*—hard core—of francophone Africa longtime heads of state worried for exactly the same reason. The program of the socialist/communist coalition elected months later promised significant changes in the relationships between Africa and France. Mitterrand's first

prime minister, Pierre Mauroy, named a young law professor named Jean Pierre Cot as Minister of Cooperation. The Socialist Party's documents, Mitterrand's promises, and the activist agenda of Cot anticipated a new era of French-African policy and the mercantilism, militarism, personalism, and corruption of Giscard d'Estaing's last years appeared to be dying. It was to be replaced by a policy in which France would seek genuine development and dedicate resources to it, disentangle itself from noxious allies such as the South African regime and Mobutu, speak on an international stage for the Third World, and introduce some morality into a notably amoral area of its foreign policy.

The hope for the new era lasted for exactly eighteen months. The December 1983 resignation of Cot (who refused to be transferred to an ambassadorship in Madrid) made official the collapse of any socialist policy based on *tiers-mondisme* (Whiteman 1983; Bayart 1984; Cot 1984). Instead, Mitterrand centralized African policy into his own hands, returned it to its deeply personalistic formulations, and gave up on institutional reform in relations with the francophone states. Personalism and a reluctance to upset existing allies tied France closely to the *noyau dur* again; it is with the pyramidal regimes controlled by one individual that personalistic ties can mean the most.

Among the failures of the first Mitterrand years, one is particularly notable: policy was neither decentralized nor institutionalized. Francophone heads of state quickly developed the habit of turning to Mitterrand's advisor Guy Penne. Penne, a dentist, was evidently selected for his loyalty to Mitterrand and his Masonic connections. During the Cot era the president's African unit had to hastily disburse aid and compliments to African leaders in order to make up for Cot's moral lectures and threats to elite interests. After Cot's departure policymaking power reverted completely to the presidency. No independent institutional power sources would be overtly tolerated; the Ministry of Cooperation, now

headed by Mitterrand loyalist Christian Nucci, returned to its traditional role of presidential fief (Bayart 1984).

The record in terms of direct policy contained little change. Human rights, reduction in the preferences given to francophone states, rapprochements with states such as Nigeria and Cameroon, and most efforts at elevating the moral tone of French aid or military activities ended quickly. As the structural adjustment programs of the 1980s were developed, France attempted to mitigate their effects with either interventions in the international institutions or by developing varieties of special credits for francophone states (Cumming 1995). The sheer cost of stabilizing, let alone contributing to, the development of francophone Africa meant that such efforts had little visible impact. The most enduring and impressive moralization of French policy was in its activities in southern Africa, which nonetheless attracted opposition in international fora, caused many ties to France to be cut and led Mitterrand to develop relationships with the frontline states of Angola and Mozambique (Bayart 1984; Cuddumbey 1996).

5 z *Mitterrand after Cot*

Added to the existing peril of relying on French executives' interpretation of national interests, the 1980s saw the geopolitical and economic terms of the relationship changing. France was increasingly unwilling (and, probably, unable) to retrieve francophone African states as their economies collapsed. African *grandeur* was becoming a very expensive proposition and was starting to seem less grand on the world stage. This shift in the costs of African involvement preceded the end of the Cold War, but 1989 reduced the benefits of Africa as well. As a mid-rank power, humbled by global financial flows in 1983, France was hardly able to find funds sufficient to prevent the collapse of

political economies as weak as those of the francophone African states. It is debatable whether French aid to these governments would have solved their problems. The first manifestation of France's rejection of the costs of francophone Africa came with French endorsements for the World Bank's structural adjustment programs of the 1980s. While preferential loans, direct aid, and forms of debt cancellation during the decade ameliorated the effects of the programs in French-allied states, it became clear that France effectively chose to multilateralize much of its earlier responsibilities towards francophone Africa. Nobody within the French government or politics could think of an alternative development agenda. For that matter nobody in France's government or politics could think of a viable alternative to financial rigor in France. The earlier Lomé accords had transferred part of French aid responsibilities to the European communities anyway. In the 1980s, France, lacking will, funds, or a strategy for African development, endorsed the activities of Bretton Woods institutions as well. Thus, elites in francophone Africa along with their French allies and arbitrageurs faced further dangers to their increasingly important resource flows from the ex-metropole as the costs of sustaining the regimes of francophone Africa began to exceed the costs that France would pay.

Administrative decay in France

The Gaullist model depended on a hyperpresidential system in France with a very interested president. If the president ceased to dominate French relations with Africa, the game would change. Mitterrand was the first president to face a period of *cohabitation*, or rule by a president from one party and a prime minister and legislature from another. African policy superficially was one area of policy in which cohabitation changed nothing. While in many policy sectors the rightist (Gaullist) government of Chirac (1986-1988) repudiated or modified socialist policy, Chirac rarely expressed

any discord with Mitterrand's African policies. Both politicians shared extensive personal ties with African elites and experience in colonial Africa. Both favored personalized, informal relations with African states, preferred dealing with the former colonies of the present *noyau dur*, and supported the continuation of the African support for French *grandeur* and *indépendance* in return for French financial, military, and political support.

However, beneath this seemingly substantive agreement, *cohabitation* splintered French policymaking in African affairs. Chirac, like most old Gaullists, had an extensive network of personal supporters and friends among the elites of francophone Africa as did members of his cabinet. African leaders and interested private parties now increased their chances of support by exploiting multiple places to appeal. This increase, like the privatization of the Foccart network in 1974, reduced the autonomy and effectiveness of the presidency. Unlike Foccart's firing, however, the increase was accompanied by a multiplication of sources of influence and power over French state actions, since whole new political clans became simultaneously involved; as if to prove the point, Prime Minister Chirac hired Foccart as an advisor to *his* office. The shapes of networks interested in French policy changed and there were policy shifts on lower levels, such as the fate of public aid or the itineraries of high-level public officials on visits to Africa. Thus, agreement on most major issues of the day in no way stopped the increasing fragmentation of the state's African policy.

One particularly important effect of *cohabitation* was to speed up the development of independent centers of African expertise within the French state. Most departments are in some way involved in African affairs: each branch of the military and the secret services, the Ministry of Cooperation, the Ministry of Education (which organizes the *coopérants*), the Treasury, and the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (which has always faced difficulties playing a role in African policy). In the time of the Gaullist model, the policies of each ministry in Africa were simply implementation of presidential instructions, with the presidential Africa office overseeing them. Independent African policy in each ministry on even low levels, did not usually need to be made and was not welcome. Despite this, the depth of their interactions with pro-French states of francophone Africa, the long periods of time many officials spent working on African affairs, and the (corrupt or merely dubious) rewards of contacts in African elites and French businesses all made it reasonable for officials in the various ministries to enlarge their specific African bureaux. Ministers, facing these incentives, created African affairs units, divisions, and posts as soon as *cohabitation* allowed them to do so. Such Africa specialists proliferated throughout the government as Chirac and his ministers developed the means of attending to African affairs without the institutional resources of the presidential Africa unit. This institutional fragmentation increased the opportunities for outsiders to influence policy out of public view and the interpenetration of African elites, French interested parties, and the French state itself.

Beyond this constitutional difficulty, France was evolving. First, the political elite of France was changing as a new generation of politicians appeared. France had always been remarkably corrupt for its size, efficiency, and power (Crozier 1963) but this problem worsened in the 1980s. According to Ezra Suleiman, the all-important state elites were moving from an ethos of public service to self-service (1995). As the state became a less appealing long-term employer, for a variety of reasons, the new members of the state elite began to view their posts as stepping-stones to lucrative employment elsewhere, with deleterious effects on the probity and competence of top French administration. In African affairs, the increasing corruption and decreasing prestige and honor of state service felled one

more barrier to a system of decentralized corruption. Increasingly, if members of the French state elite chose sectors for the possibilities of gain and private-sector positions (*pontuflage*), the incentive to be an honest Africanist decreased even further. The shadiness of African policy, and the prospect of better opportunities in other sectors further decreased the attractiveness of African affairs to the best of the younger elites.

Second, French individuals dealing with Africa were becoming less elite and less unified.

Arguably, part of the murkiness and ethnical grey shades in French-African policy stemmed from the lack of a formal elite in the area. Most important sectors of French life and politics are dominated by graduates of the *grandes écoles*, whose common educational experiences at selective and extremely prestigious institutions bind them into an elite with a similar ethos and strong sets of contacts (Bourdieu 1989). The *grande école* for Africa, the École Nationale Française d'Outre-Mer (ENFOM), closed with decolonization. Thus, while the old corps of ENFOM graduates remained in place, the lack of a systematic training and selection program for the French elites in this area probably contributed to the lack of elite cohesion and the high incidence of the picturesque mercenaries, businessmen, fixers, spies, dubious politicians, and colonels that mark French African policy (Smith and Glaser 1992 :17).

Individual figures with backgrounds in the *grandes écoles* appear in policy, but their school-based links are to the elites who run other sectors of the French political economy, not to the variegated, sometimes thuggish, often shady, and invariably picturesque individuals who appear at every level of African policy.

Third, new pressure points were appearing in France. The perpetual crisis of French political parties worsened during the 1980s (Mény 1992). African leaders traditionally have invested in French

political parties (Bayart 1990). French parties, compared to those in other Western countries, are generally (and have always been) weak and unstable. A clear result of this is that they lack financing, stable organization and infrastructure; at best they are machines to help the president (Suleiman 1994). Instead of parties, powerful politicians called *notables* dominate French politics. They are generally difficult to control, operate and maintain their own power bases and finances, and monopolize party attention and party resources alike (Mény 1995).

Party weakness and *notable* strength have two relevant effects. It makes local *notables* rely on their own fundraising abilities and it makes parties and party leaders grateful for whatever resources they do receive. Both of these factors are clearly conducive to corruption. Many francophone African heads of state, who stand to gain far more from a vote in a French legislature than in their own legislature, thus took to donating to parties (except for the Communist Party). Party weakness increases the leverage of the donors, and the parties eroded badly in the 1980s (Mény 1995). Those *notables*, such as right-wing Gaullist Charles Pasqua and Chirac, who had contacts in Africa used them, and francophone African leaders, noting the perils of presidential dependency and increasingly reliant on political extraversion, obliged with increasingly large sums. Thus the political extraversion of French parties aids the political extraversion of African leaders.

All of these structural changes in French politics, the French state, and African political economies pushed towards the development of a decentralized model of French relations with the *pré carré*. Finally, however, Mitterrand's behavior effectively overdetermined the collapse of the Gaullist system. The disposition of the president largely determined African policy and Mitterrand was the first French president since decolonization to ignore Africa most of the time. As if to illustrate his lack of

interest and acceptance of policy drift, Mitterrand demanded that Africa's demands on his time be limited to half an hour per week (Marchesin 1995).

In the late 1980s Mitterrand's personal policies were carried out largely by his African advisor—his son Jean-Cristophe Mitterrand—who never escaped the newspaper moniker “papamadi” (daddy-told-me). The younger Mitterrand, like most Africa specialists in French politics, developed close personal ties to francophone African heads of state and made considerable personal profits from preferential investments. Some observers of French African specialists, even very jaded ones, thought the younger Mitterrand's financial benefits excessive and he progressively became a liability to his father (Krop 1994). This father-son team remained, however, rudderless. While few doubted that the actions of the younger Mitterrand had the approval of the elder, his activities seemed largely dedicated to preserving exactly the regimes in power and the preservation of preferential relations between French firms and francophone African regimes. The communication and coordination advantages of a father-son team matter little if there are few policies to communicate or coordinate.

Without a strong hand and without significant institutions, the field of African policy rapidly devolved into a morass of personal networks as does any personalistic regime which suddenly has no active central person (Bayart 1996). Blaming Mitterrand alone is probably nonsensical, given the inherent instability of the Gaullist system. Giscard d'Estaing had to put tremendous energy into African affairs to maintain his control over policy, and still lost control of his own ambassadorship to Gabon. In all probability, facing the steadily increasing profusion and importance of networks, and the developments in French politics of the 1980s and 1990s, no president could have been sure to maintain a centralized system.

“Paristroika”

The development of French interest in African democratization displays some of the tensions in French policy during the later years of the Mitterrand presidency. It presents a counterpoint to the moralization of the early Mitterrand years. In 1990, at the La Baule Franco-African summit, Mitterrand expressed support for democratization in Africa in his speech (Kitchen and Paddack 1990). Shortly after, Chirac delivered a famous interview in which he declared that multiparty democracy is inappropriate for Africa (Wauthier 1995: 552). Wags dubbed the event “Paristroika.” African democrats became more optimistic. Long-term heads of state such as Bongo and Houphouët-Boigny, already under pressure from democratic movements in their countries, reacted coldly. Chronologically, La Baule cannot explain the start and development of the democracy movement in any francophone state (see the histories in Clark and Gardinier 1997). Such an argument would in any case radically overestimate the power of France over African societies. But the La Baule speech did seem to be evidence that after eight years of personalism and amorality that followed Cot’s resignation the French government would apply pressure for democratization. Africans, with more or less caution, interpreted the speech that way and this accounts for its catalytic effect (Heilbrunn and Toulabor 1995).

However, this change in rhetoric led to no sweeping changes in policy. Most clearly, French policy did not visibly change to support democracy. Aid flows either remained the same or varied independently of democratization; the most visible change in aid was a sharp reduction in funds for Benin the year after it democratized (Bratton and van de Walle 1997:241-242). The most plausible explanation is that while strongman Kérékou sometimes had rocky relations with Paris, he did have contacts across the French government. When Kérékou launched a “marxist revolutionary state” and

nationalized a large group of French businesses, the French Ministry of Cooperation gave Benin the funds used to compensate the business owners (Decalo 1997). Democratization, by nature, introduces uncertainty and increases the risks for stakeholders. In the specific case of Benin, democratization (and the anti-corruption promises of the newly elected Soglo) would upset the flows of resources between various points in the private sectors and states of Benin and France. Unlike the Gaullist model, in which a regime's utility to the president was the dominant factor in French resource flows, the developing decentralized corruption of the 1980s and 1990s sustained the maintenance of individuals in their present locations in their respective hierarchies and webs. Any regime change which disrupted these networks could reduce the flow of resources they carried.

Mitterrand's speech at the following Franco-African summit (1991) included references to democracy but stressed that France supported stability and was reluctant to interfere with the political structures of friendly African states. The point was taken (Wauthier 1995:573-574). The quick rise and fall of the democratization campaign highlights both the resilience of the original bargain that linked Africa to the French state and also the robustness and effectiveness of networks linking the French state with *messieurs Afrique*.

6 z Political extraversion under decentralized corruption

Given the density of interactions, personalism, lack of institutionalization, and the corruption of French relations with francophone Africa, as well as the peculiar corruptions of the French state and the neopatrimonial regimes of francophone Africa, the logically predictable model for French-African relations is one which features strong networks among individuals inside the French state, members of francophone African elites, and private actors. That is exactly what has developed; the year 1994,

under rightist (non-Gaullist) Prime Minister Balladur and a weakened Mitterrand, supplied two major events which illustrate the new patterns of French policy. This new model for French policy is one of decentralized corruption built on dense webs of interpersonal relationships and periodically upset by high-level interventions which mark the retreat of France from Africa. The devaluation of the CFA franc in January 1994 and the French involvement in Rwanda from La Baule to the 1994 intervention together symbolize the new functioning of French African policy.

The Devaluation

The CFA franc (Godeau 1995) is a common currency organized by two central banks for regions roughly approximating the old French Equatorial and French West African colonial federations. Pegged to the French franc, the currency was guaranteed by the French government through the treasury. States and the individual central banks had almost no autonomous macroeconomic policy. French treasury officials determined monetary emissions policy and general macroeconomic policy.

Beyond the clear diminution of sovereignty in the CFA arrangement, the CFA zone affected the political economies of francophone Africa in three ways (van de Walle 1991). First, it did stabilize economic policy and thereby helped stabilize their economies. Monosectoral commodities producers are vulnerable to large swings in commodity prices, but in aggregate the CFA muffled the economic effects of global commodity prices on states' growth rates. Second, by stabilizing the economies and removing the central bank from political competition, it might have stabilized the political systems of the zone countries. Third, the Zone Franc radically shaped political extraversion strategies by introducing some serious distortions in its economies (Valée 1989). Almost immediately upon its inception, the

CFA franc proved overvalued.⁷ Few observers expected it to change parities (they were correct until 1994). This overvaluation was to systematically modify trade patterns. While monosectoral commodities producers will not have extensive trade relations (regardless of institutions), the CFA did exacerbate bias towards products from within the block, often at the expense of efficiency.

In short, the CFA franc was an important resource to African elites and French businessmen. Through it France performed a regulatory function on the system, reducing the ability of elites to choose macroeconomic policies destructive of their economies and themselves. Beneficiaries of the CFA parity, which included many well-connected members of francophone African elites, could not be expected to support devaluation. Nevertheless, France did devalue the CFA, reducing its value by 50 percent against the French franc with almost no warning. The reason lies in two important facts.

The first fact is that CFA policy was relatively immune to network penetration. Institutionally, CFA policy was made in the French treasury and in small circles of high-level politicians and bureaucrats. Treasury officials are not numerous and hold some of the most prestigious bureaucratic posts in France. They are much better integrated into elites of mainland France than into the circles which deal with Africa (their professional interests are in France and Europe, not the CFA which is only a pegged currency). This limits the opportunities that political extraversion networks can use to change policy. Policies are then even further centralized; mid-level officials are unlikely to be able to significantly influence them. Generally, only the prime minister, the head of the central bank, and

⁷ French monetary policy never was made with African welfare in mind. After the 1970s, French geopolitical and economic motivations caused the French to bind the franc to the German Deutschemark, which entailed following changes made by the Bundesbank in its hawkishly anti-inflationary management of the West German economy. Thus, macroeconomic policies intended to keep German inflation low were more or less directly applied to CFA states such as Burkina Faso and Gabon.

possibly the president have input into policy. In other words, monetary policy in any system with functioning macroeconomic institutions (clearly including France) is almost inherently centralized and it is difficult and unsatisfying to construct networks within it.

The second fact is that the CFA came to the attention of a leader who lacked African contacts and interests. The prime minister who took the decision, Edouard Balladur, was part of the new generation of technocratic and Europe-oriented French politicians whose careers had developed after decolonization. A graduate of the *grandes écoles*, he knew little about African affairs and preferred not to deal with them. His priorities were in the areas which he had been trained for and had experience in—European affairs and management of the French state. The older style of Gaullist or socialist politician, with colonial experience and contacts across a diversity of people, is largely giving way to such younger politicians with similar, domestic, educational experiences and networks and local bases of support. The personalism of French-African relations at the highest levels requires a degree of interest in and sympathy for francophone African elites, which most of the newer elite technocrats at the top levels of French politics lack (Hibou 1995). For this younger generation, Africa is often an abstraction and almost invariably decoupled from *grandeur* and *indépendance*.

The roles and predispositions of those involved in making the decision clarified the divergence of African policy and most other French activities. To these treasury technocrats and younger politicians, the CFA appeared on their horizons only because it was a liability for the state's finances, and so they solved the problem by devaluing it. In this they reflected a justifiable strategic calculation: that after the Cold War, the international power and prestige of being a bloc leader had decreased. The power and prestige deriving from Africa had decreased yet more, and the expense of supporting

African allies had increased. No construction of French interests or solidarities appeared in the media of political debates to justify the perpetuation of an overvalued CFA. The early 1990s were a period of “Afropessimism” in the media, so French political discourse was particularly prone to stress the hopeless cases. Without the traditional geopolitical justifications for involvement, French political elites could not and did not justify the value of the CFA; they no longer saw the value of the geopolitical gains, which left them indisposed to fulfill their half of the original bargain when it cost. The CFA franc still exists, and is still probably overvalued, but is currently not a problem for French finances.

Rwanda 1990-1994

Rwanda, while superficially an island of stability in the unstable Great Lakes region, contained a divide between two major ethnic groups, the Hutu and the Tutsi (for source histories see Braeckman 1994; Reyntjens 1994; Verschave 1994; Guichaoua 1995; Prunier 1995). Under colonial rule these groups became politically polarized, and the minority Tutsis ruled over the vast majority of Hutus. In 1975 Giscard d’Estaing first incorporated Rwanda into the French *pré carré*, sending increasingly large numbers of *coopérants*, military advisors, quantities of aid to the country and by signing a military agreement. It was in 1990, however, that France made its decisive moves to support the incumbent Rwandan government. In that year a strongly prodemocratic performance by Rwandan ruler Juvenal Habyarimana at La Baule coincided with a sudden invasion by the strengthening Tutsi guerrillas of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) from Uganda. France responded with paratroops, who defended Kigali and headed off any possibility of an RPF victory. Meanwhile, responding to tensions within the regime and the pressures for democratization felt across the country, Rwanda began to liberalize and continued to proclaim fidelity to La Baule’s promises.

Democratization, however sincere, both responded to and increased pressures on the regime from the public, from a newly liberated public sphere, and from factions within. Democratization is invariably a dangerous phase for an authoritarian regime and many individuals within it or parasitic upon it. It is also a time when stoking ethnic rivalries is an effective way to stay in power. Manipulation of ethnicity to provoke violence was, however, a well-documented feature of the decaying Rwandan regime from 1990 onwards (African Rights 1995; Chrétien et al. 1995).

Cliques within the Rwandan government appear to have steadily increased the level of ethnic tensions within the country, largely by increasing Hutu fears of Tutsi revenge. Tutsi refugees, mostly in Uganda and mostly anglophone, responded to the increasing repression in Rwanda during the negotiations by launching a series of invasions. Finally, in 1994, as the peace accords intended to bring stability and multiparty democracy to Rwanda continued, Rwandan leader Habyarimana was killed when his airplane was shot down (the perpetrators remain unknown). Within hours a well-organized massacre began, with Hutu moderates and all Tutsis targeted for death. Almost immediately the Tutsi refugees of the RPF began to advance across the country, creating waves of Hutu refugees. Most refugees fled to Zaire, where they proved a destabilizing force. Finally, France intervened and sent troops under UN auspices to secure a safe area for refugees and, presumably, to stop the genocide. Given French involvement in Rwanda before the intervention, the intervention did not convince many people that it was conducted solely for humanitarian reasons; many noted that the French military saved few Tutsis but did permit servants, soldiers, and accomplices of the old regime to flee to Zaire.

The French role in Rwanda prior to Operation Turquoise, the 1994 intervention, demonstrates the new contours of French policy. Apart from the 1990 deployment of paratroopers, Rwandan policy

was largely left alone by higher levels. Policy responded to the intents and concerns of the networks of French businesses, government officials including secret services and armed forces members, and groups within the Rwandan elite seeking security and resource flows (see especially Verschave 1994 and Smith 1995). Meanwhile, evidence of a possible genocide piled up.

The French secret services (SDECE) involved in Rwanda and maintaining extensive links to the Rwandan government and security apparatus, trained Rwandan state security employees and apparently offered intelligence services to the state. More directly, the SDECE did not apparently gather intelligence on, or seek to warn Paris of, the clear threat that their allies in the Rwandan state might engineer even larger-scale ethnic violence. Even without accusing them of directly assisting the genocide planners, they did not show any signs of attempting to head off the visibly approaching events (Braeckman 1994). The French military continued to train and equip the Rwandan military. Rwandan affairs officials pressed for and received steadily augmented shipments of weapons to Rwanda until the genocide (Human Rights Watch 1994; African Rights 1995). There is no evidence that the French military sought to discourage their Hutu trainees from participating in and organizing ethnic violence, either during the sporadic outbreaks in the early 1990s or during the preparations for the major genocide.

French military and intelligence officers in Rwanda clearly sympathized with and assisted the Habyarimana regime beyond their advisory duties (for examples, Prunier 1995:108-113). They had been posted to defend the country against a Tutsi military threat which they associated with the “Anglo-Saxon” powers, and were given few incentives to warn of threatening signs in the country (and who would they warn?). The situation produced a considerably greater commitment on their part

to the existing Rwandan regime of Habyarimana than to the Rwandan state or people. Further, the democratic, republican ideologies of the French military stressed majority rule. French republicanism has long had a vaguely Rousseauvian taste for sovereign national wills which has made life difficult for minorities (Hoffman 1995; Porch 1995). To defend a Hutu regime, in a majority-Hutu country, against minority invaders seeking to take power by force probably seemed quite reasonable and honorable to the French soldiers and intelligence officers stationed in the country (Prunier 1995:111).

In addition to the partially intentional and partially spontaneous overidentification of French armed and intelligence services in Rwanda with the Habyarimana regime, the circuits of Franco-Rwandan relations boasted many private actors linked to both states. Such business and private individuals, who often were well-connected in mainland France, could and did lobby to defend and increase French aid to the Habyarimana regime which had given them their benefits. Rwanda received the favor of the Ministry of Cooperation, and France directed large sums of foreign aid to French nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operating in Rwanda and to the Rwandan state.

The intervention of the French president and the prime minister is strikingly absent between 1990 and 1994—between the crises of the Hutu regime. In the intervening period, different clans of French and Rwandans organized policy. The minutia of Franco-African relations, often conducted at middle and low levels of policy, diffused accountability and decentralized decisionmaking. It diffused corruption and prevented the emergence of any strategy. Thus, the combination of private actors, military and intelligence networks, and Rwandan regime members made policy, albeit policy that was sometimes disrupted by executive attention.

Nothing material in the marginality and dependence of francophone African states predisposes them to become French clients and accept such complete reliance on France. It is generally rational for dependents in a clientelistic relationship to seek to diversify potential sources of support. The African clients of France, however, knew that the mere threat of diversification could prompt French reaction, for French strategy required the dependence of these states. Threats to defect thus carried considerable weight for the states in the francophone bloc.

French pursuit of geopolitical goals in Africa—its half of the bargain—depended on the president and his view of France's place in the world. As the president receded and French strategic thought shifted, this bargain collapsed and left African elites and French *messieurs Afrique* hunting new ways to gain the resources that the bargain had previously ensured. The story of decentralized corruption is that of the collision of the French state organization with decaying patrimonial regimes of francophone Africa. This decay took place in the context of many opportunities for interaction between officials on both sides to pursue individual interests. It is difficult for the French state to manage acephalous dynamics and volatile conditions in African states and is apt to sabotage states as often as it once stabilized them (Greer 2000).⁸ To eliminate these networks would require uprooting them from the administrations and starving them of resources. That would be a strategic move requiring the political capital and engagement of a president or prime minister determined to overcome the resistance

⁸ Francophone Africa has been relatively stable, for its continent (Grey, 1990). French daily interventions in this sense were an emergency regulatory function for the system, for better or for worse; now they are far less predictable or predictably stabilizing.

of those French who benefit, and African political party donors.⁹

The declining profile of Africa in French politics and the strong critiques of French directionlessness and corruption in African affairs might eventually leave the system of decentralized corruption without enough resources to function. Maintaining individuals' links with francophone African elites and the private sector, in open politics, is little justification for allocating scarce resources in a time when unemployment and European integration are taxing the resources of what has become a middle power. Recent years have seen strong critiques of French policy emerging from authors and activists in both Africa and France (Freud 1988; Adda and Smouts 1989; Oyono 1990; Beti 1993; Braeckman 1994; Verschave 1994), including the catalytic edited collection by Serge Michailof (1993) and the development of nongovernmental organizations engaged in and sometimes dedicated to such criticism (Agir Ici et Survie 1995).

Implications for theory

The experience of francophone states with political extraversion is an instructive example of how individual strategies can take in not only purely economic relations with the outside world, but also how political systems and economies can become interpenetrated and manipulated by participants. The formation of transnational networks dedicated to providing French resources to African elites is an unedifying form of cosmopolitanism that can be examined comparatively from the better-studied migrant or intellectual networks. The gap between two modes of French involvement in Africa is thus interesting from the perspective on debates in international relations theory between domestic and international

⁹ Retrenchment under socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin took the form of simply not appointing a minister of Cooperation and transferring the portfolio into the foreign ministry. The ministry's structure and personnel remain, as does the *cellule africaine* in Chirac's office.

explanations (second- and third-image arguments).

First, for France in Africa, the interesting characteristic is the extent to which its policy adhered to grand strategy or bureaucratic politics *as a contingent result of organizational form*. Under the Gaullist system, the president held sufficient power that France almost attained the unified cognition and rationality with respect to Africa that international relations theories commonly posit for states. Personalism made a perfectly strategic form of engagement possible, but also made it unstable and subject to a degree of idiosyncrasy that is extraordinary for a modern state. In the era of decentralized corruption, the French state's African affairs agencies have instead decayed into congeries of differentiated bodies with differing relationships to unofficial networks in Africa and France. Neither bureaucratic politics and networks nor French strategic interests alone serves to explain French relations with Africa. Rather, the centralization of decisionmaking varies across sectors and, sometimes, with events. Rwanda policy rapidly recentralized after the Rwandan genocide became an event worthy of any head of state's attention. The CFA's comfortable parity was upset when high-level leaders examined it.

This is the value of French-African relations as an extreme case in the study of international relations. The extreme personalism and informality of relations maximize the impact of networks and individual actors, and the dramatic effect that they have on the conduct of relations highlights the general importance of bureaucratic inertia and slow change in foreign policy. Most states control their foreign policy with more success than France controls its African policy, but this case suggests that rule-bending, subcultures and inertia among officers in the field can have dramatic effects, both in creating policy outcomes (as in Gabon) and in creating facts on the ground that drastically constrain the state

later (as in Rwanda).

Second, density matters. The policy of most states toward countries which do not strongly concern them can be hijacked by canny elites (Gibbs 1991), if nothing else but for the good bureaucratic reason that people at the top charged with formulating strategy cannot attend to everything at once and may not be at all interested in most things. But interactions can be so dense as to tie countries in profound ways. France and francophone Africa are, by now, inescapable from each other, as are Russia and the former Soviet Union, or the United States and Latin America. So many resources flow through many different bonds that people can appropriate large resources for themselves. American policy in subsaharan Africa (or French policy in Central America) might cause serious problems, but it cannot accidentally destabilize a whole regime and state structure in the way that a closely linked power can.

France and Africa are bound by innumerable threads. When France begins to move away with no attention to these threads, it is apt to leave parts of itself and Africa painfully out of joint. In closely bound states no strategy can separate them to the point where they can conduct policy without considering each other; the mere fact that a French policy maker does not consider Africa does not mean that his or her policy doesn't affect Africa and rebound to affect France again. Affective ties can change state politics and identities while ties of resource flows—political extraversion—can have more immediately damaging or helpful consequences. It is thus worthwhile for international relations experts to recognize the existence and scope of political extraversion, and explicitly consider it in both theorizing the life of states in the state system, and the role of the state system in weak states.

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