

Francophonie in sub-Saharan Africa: Post-colonial dependence or self-determination?

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Cartoon: '[Françafrique](#)'



Source: [Abdelghani Dahdouh](#) ²

Abstract: Africa is today the most important part of the Francophonie. French is an official or co-official language along with other languages in 21 African countries, all in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Since the end of colonialism and Cold War politics, changes in the Francophonie have been driven largely by external factors, such as a drive to combat Anglo-American cultural hegemony. Continuities, on the other hand, are mainly due to France's historical affinity with Africa, its view of its place in the world and its understanding of the role of the state. The International Organization of Francophonie (OIF) defends the common interests of the Francophone area and imposes a common vision for reform, particularly in the area of terms of trade. However, the demographic future of Francophonie will play out more and more in southern countries, especially in Africa. In 2010, half of all Francophones worldwide lived in Africa. It is expected that by 2060 almost 84 % of the French-speaking population will live in Africa. Francophonie is mainly driven by the Francophone power elite in, both France and Africa, and the infamous *Françafrique* patronage network. Both propagate the universality of French as a language, including Pidgin French (often biasedly referred to as 'petit-nègre'), culture and way of life. Although the fate of African Francophonie is still determined by the North, the high mobility of the African population, driven by increasing urbanization, means that multilingualism, e.g. the simultaneous use of French and African languages, is 'deterritorialized'. Therefore, it would be crucial to solve the problem of the interface between French and African languages and to identify which other languages could replace French and in which areas this would be most desirable. Apart from that, there are promising perspectives for self-determined development in the area of the francophone culture of the SSA. The African film industry, literature and religion could make it possible to find a new African rationality, a new way of defining oneself and hoping for a better future, free from the socio-economic inequalities that characterize the francophone post-colony despite globalization. Thus, a viable, dynamic and truly African culture in Francophone SSA could equal and even surpass the rival 'Commonwealth culture'. Although both European colonial powers, Great Britain and France, conquered substantial geographic spaces in SSA, using language as a means of control, the resulting networks, the Commonwealth and Francophonie are quite different.

Keywords: [Francophone Africa](#), [Francophonie](#), [Françafrique](#), [CFA franc](#), [international trade](#), [free trade area](#), [customs union](#), [Commonwealth](#), [migration](#), [demography](#), [governance](#), [autocracy](#), [devolution of power](#), [sustainable development](#), [social movements](#), [social media](#), [post-colonialism](#), [Sub-Saharan Africa](#), [DR Congo](#), [Madagascar](#), [Ivory Coast](#), [Senegal](#), [African culture](#), [African Studies](#)

JEL-Code: D72, D74, D84, D91, E26, F02, F22, F35, F51, F52, F54, I25, I31, J11, J15, N37, N47, N97, O17, P47, Z1, Z12, Z13

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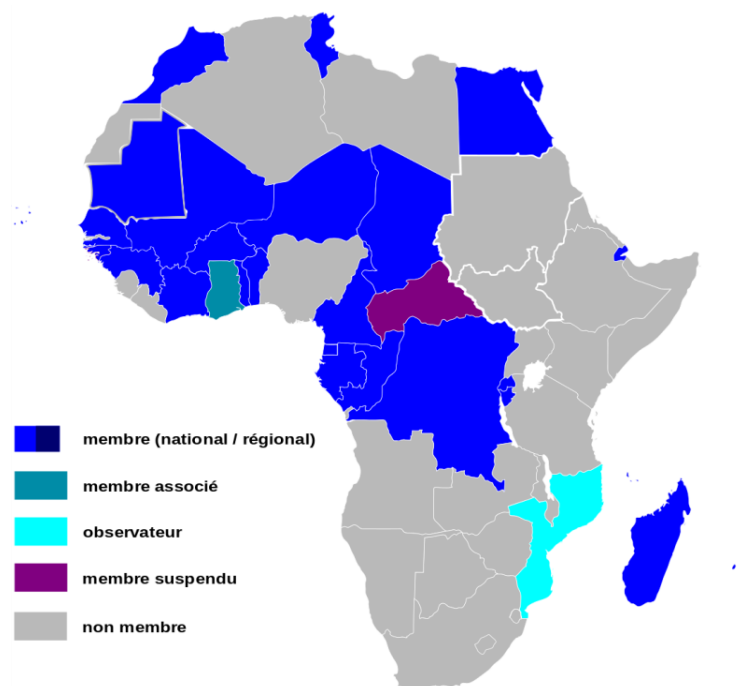
² [Abdelghani Dahdouh](#), Moroccan cartoonist, publishing in the daily Moroccan newspaper '[Al-Massae](#)'. President of the Moroccan Association of Cartoonists (AMC). © (all rights reserved). Source: [peace.international.org](#).

1. Introduction

The concept and term '[Francophonie](#)' was coined already in 1880 during the high time of European Imperialism in Africa. Shortly before the [Berlin Conference](#) of 1884–1885, it laid the foundation for the colonial division of Africa in the subsequent [scramble for Africa](#). However, institutionalised and structured became the common representation of the interests of Francophone countries only on 20 March 1970 in [Niamey](#), ten years after the official end of [colonialism](#) ([Francophonie](#), official website).

The foundation of the ([Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique](#)), the predecessor of the [Organisation internationale de la Francophonie](#) (OIF), was driven by an initiative of three francophone African heads of state, the [Senegalese Léopold Sédar Senghor](#), [Tunisia's Habib Bourguiba](#), and [Hamani Diori](#) of [Niger](#), with Prince [Norodom Sihanouk](#) of [Cambodia](#) joining the move of altogether 21 countries. Meanwhile, 88 states and governments are members of the OIF, including 54 full and 7 associate members and 27 observers ([Francophonie](#), official website). Traditionally, the main financial contributors to the OIF were [France](#) and [Canada](#) (including [Quebec](#) and [New Brunswick](#)) (Munro, 2022).

Map 1: the [Francophonie](#) in [Africa](#) ³



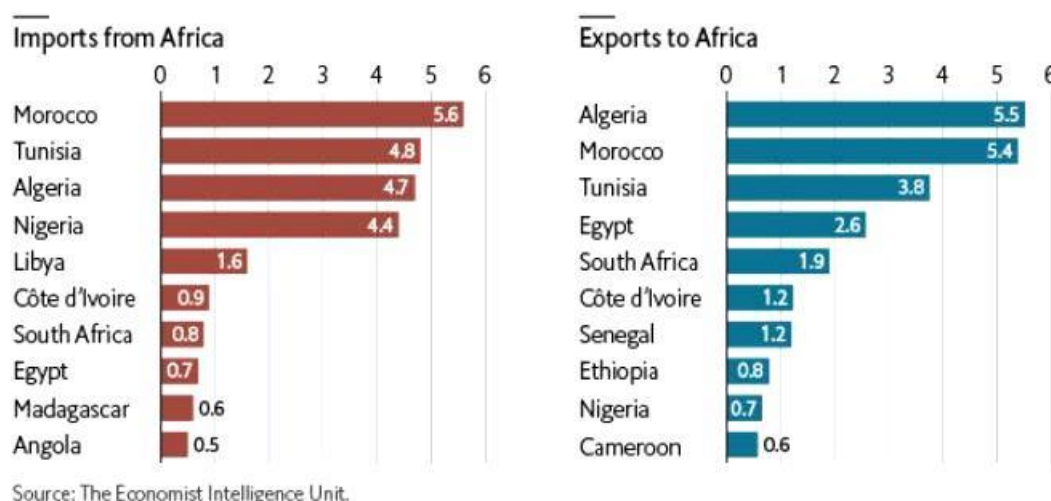
Source: [Wikimedia commons](#), 2022

Experts who participate regularly in the meetings of the [Francophonie](#) may have become uneasy, or even consider the exercise as a kind of caricature because of heavy ambiguities, misunderstandings and self-aggrandizement often shown during the meetings (Erfurt, 2018).

³ The 54 full members according to the [Francophonie](#) official website (dark blue), associated members (green), observer countries (light blue) and suspended members (violet). [Dakar](#) became the headquarters of the Institute of the Francophonie for education and formation, [Lomé \(Togo\)](#) the regional headquarters for [West Africa](#), and [Libreville \(Gabon\)](#) for [Central Africa](#). – For additional maps on countries where French is the official language and countries where French is currently used, as well as for African Member States of the OIF who do not have French as official or current language, see Annexe, Map 12 ff.

Nevertheless, the [OIF](#) is still very much alive, notably in [Sub-Saharan Africa](#) (SSA), where most of the French-speaking African countries are found which constitute the most important part of the Francophonie. French is an official or co-official language with other languages in 21 African countries, plus [Djibouti](#), that does not belong to [SSA](#) according to the United Nations classification. [Mauritania](#), which had been suspended from the [OIF](#) temporarily (2008-2009) adopted Arabic as the official language, but French remained largely the vernacular and also in [Mauritius](#) French was not the official language (Calero & Mather, 2019). [Algeria](#), which does not belong to the OIF because of ideological differences, nevertheless has the second largest French-speaking community in the world, with around 16 million speakers, followed by [Côte d'Ivoire](#) (OIF member) with nearly 12 million French speakers. The Francophonie is mainly driven by the Francophone power elite in, both France and Africa, and the infamous [Françafrique](#) patronage network. Both propagated the universality of French culture and way of life, based on the French language, including Pidgin French, often biasedly referred to as '[Petit-nègre](#)', a pidgin spoken by West African soldiers and their white officers in the French colonial army up to the 1950s.

Graph 1: French trade with Africa, 2019 (US\$ bn)



Source: EIU, 2022

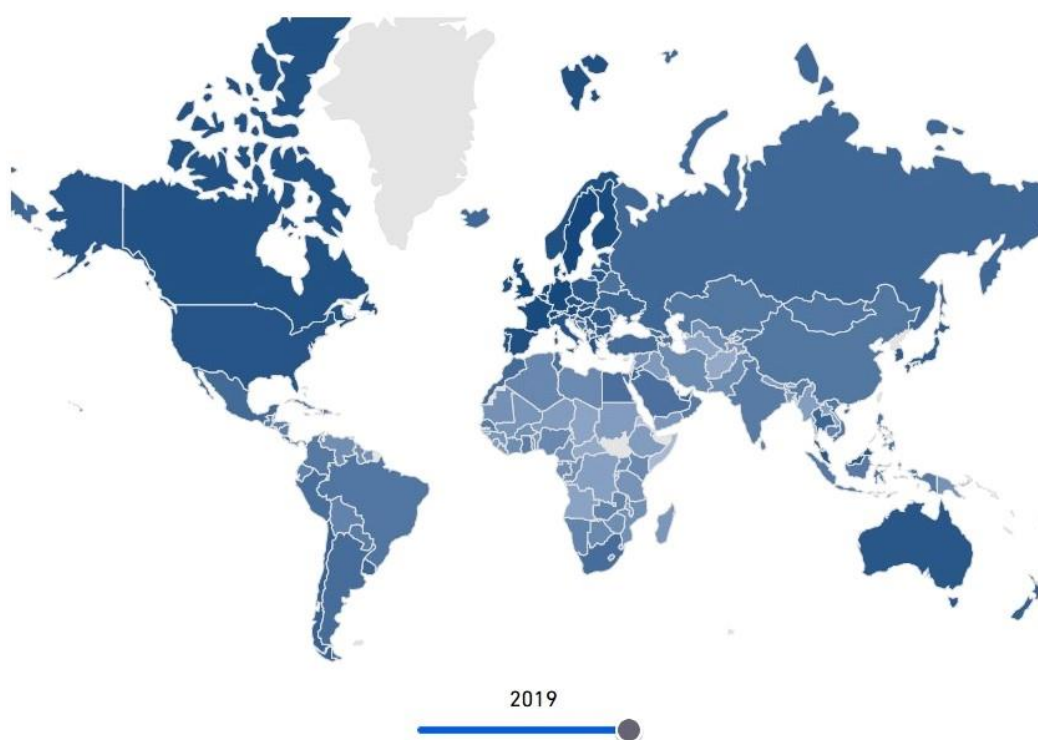
At the [OIF summit in Dakar in 2014](#), the economic and trade aspects of the [Francophonie](#) were firmly established, thereby transcending the traditional culture and language orientation, by adopting an explicit economic strategy to defend the joint interests of the Francophone space and impose a common reform vision, particularly in the field of trade (Grosu, 2020). The aim of Paris, as declared by former President Hollande in 2014, was to increase the number of French speakers up to 770 million people by 2050 because, 'when people speak the same language, trade increases by 65%' (Dekker, 2020).

Yet, although the French language and culture are crucial links and factors of production, there exist serious problems with codes of transmission in multilingual African societies. With the colonialization, West Africans had the French language and the French secular education models imposed on them. Paradoxically, those West Africans who resolutely opposed French colonization became the most fervent advocates of French in postcolonial Africa in their own countries (Diallo, 2016). As a result, education and literacy shifted from [classical \(Qur'anic\) Arabic](#) and [Ajami script](#) to French. The attachment to the French language became so deep that it obscured any language policies or language in education vision to effectively address the national language issues in education and anticipate changing language needs in

Francophone Africa (Diallo, 2016). Eurocentrism dominated education and is still present in teaching, since African history was underestimated and literature began in Rutebeuf (1235-1285) and ended with Camus, as the Senegalese philosopher [Souleymane Bachir Diagne](#) stated provocatively in an interview in *Le Monde*, 2019 (Diagne, 2019).

This impacts, notably within the realm of education, training and vulgarisation, because the transmission code and meaning are often not sufficiently mastered by either the sender or the receiver. This is further complicated by the fact that because of the mobility of populations and, in particular, growing urbanization, languages of multilingual societies tend to become 'deterritorialized' and alienated from the original social setting of use. Taking into account the demographic and social evolution in SSA, the conventional Western education systems are likely to fail, including the training and extension systems. New methods and means of mass communication would be needed that could provide viable solutions to the problem of the interface between French-African languages (Chaudenson, 1991).

Map 2: World map of [the KOF Globalisation Index](#) ⁴



Source: Gygli & Haelg & Potrafke & Sturm, 2019

Over the course of the summits, political topics, peace, democracy and human rights, sustainable development, and digital technologies were added too ([Francophonie](#), official website). At the annual Africa–France Summit in Montpellier on 8 October 2021, President Macron renewed his ambition of 28 November 2017 to restart the relationship between France and Africa beyond Françafrique through several commitments to foster a relationship of partnership, notably in the cultural field ([Francophonie](#), official website). However, the tactical universalism of Paris remained much the same (Domingues dos Santos & Schlimmer, 2021; Rosello, 2003).

⁴ Konjunkturforschungsstelle (KOF) of ETH Zurich, in Switzerland.- For additional maps and indicators see the Annexe: ,Indicator of Globalization - African Undersea Cables (2023) and the World Map of Maastricht Globalisation Index, 2012, taking into account also environmental factors.

Cartoon 2: Colonial baggage - Macron in Africa:
*France's African policy, colonial baggage and roadmap*⁵



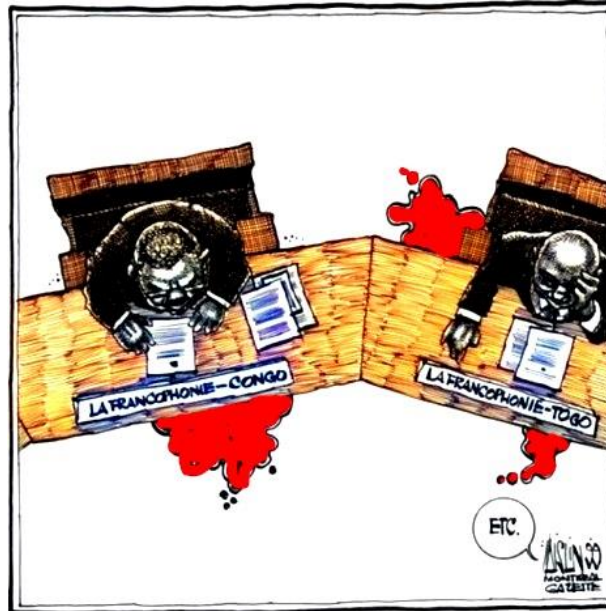
Source: Gado cartoons, November 2017

In the following, the challenges and prospects of the OIF in SSA will be analysed focussing on the political and economic repercussions of globalization, the increasing rivalry with the Commonwealth and other global players, notably China and Russia, and the post-colonial policies of former colonial powers. A concluding chapter will sound the perspectives of self-determination of Francophone countries in SSA.

⁵ Source: Gado cartoons, November 2017 - © (all rights reserved). Godfrey Mwampembwa, pen name Gado (* 1969) is a Tanzanian-born political cartoonist, animator and comics artist, living in Kenya. He is an internationally renowned artist and the 'most syndicated political cartoonist in East and Central Africa' (Gado comics, Wikipedia).

2. Challenges of post-colonial dependency of Francophone countries in SSA

Cartoon 3: 'the bloody power politics of the Francophonie in SSA'



Source: Aislin ⁶

The divide between Anglophone and Francophone Africa, which included politics, economy, society and culture in African countries, existed since colonial rule. First, it was fuelled by imperialism of fiercely competing colonial powers, later on by political, economic and cultural rivalry, including even [proxy wars](#), e.g. in [Biafra](#), [Congo](#), [Ivory Coast](#), and [Rwanda](#).

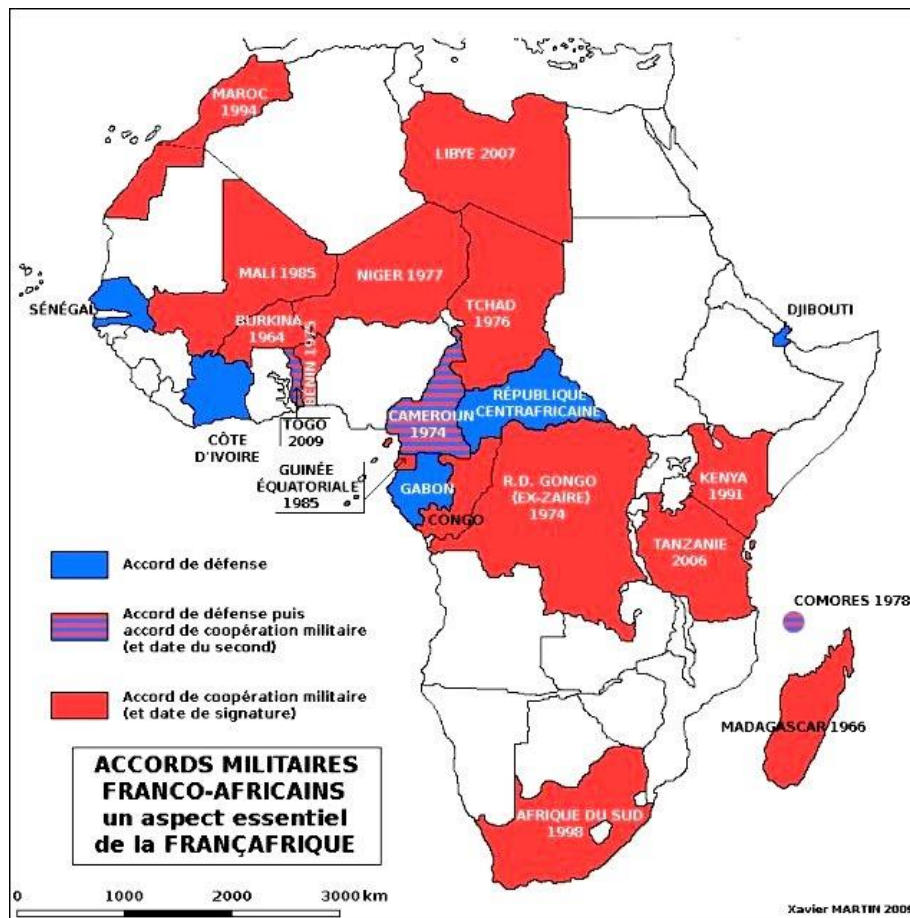
The ranking of [France](#) among the most powerful nations of the world still depends to a large extent on its political, economic, military and cultural role in Africa. Equally, some of the most notorious autocrats of francophone Africa profited from this special relationship with the 'African friends' of France. [Gabon's](#) autocrat [Omar Bongo](#), the second President of Gabon for 42 years (1967 up to his death in 2009), who embodied [Françafrique](#) like few others, characterized the [Francophonie](#) in 1996 with the statement: 'Africa without France is a car without a driver, France without Africa is a car without fuel' (Bernard, 2009). Togo's dictator, [Eyadéma Gnassingbé](#), even boasted about his personal friendship with French heads of state. Although French presidents repeatedly announced to break with the post-colonial system of the shadowy, informal and sometimes even criminal network of '[Françafrique](#)' the system remained very much alive (Borrel, 2021). The multi-award-winning novel 'Waiting for the Wild Beasts to Vote' (in French: '*En attendant le vote des bêtes sauvages*') of the Ivorian writer [Ahmadou Kourouma](#), published in 1998, sums it up in the form of a masterly satirical parable on Eyadéma and his ilk (Modenesi, 2020).

Regarding its continuing strategic interest in SSA France also upheld its military presence at strategic locations of the continent. Although the number of French troops in Africa dropped

⁶ Cartoon on the bloody power politics of the Francophonie as 'stirrup holder' of autocrats in [Sub-Saharan Africa](#): 'The Francophonie in Africa' - Artist: Aislin. Signature L.r., AISLIN 99 - © (all rights reserved). - Source: [Montreal Gazette](#), 1999; colouration by the author.

considerably to about 11,000, that represented still 63% of all French forces permanently stationed or temporarily deployed in Africa according to the French Senate (Dekker, 2020).

Map 3: French-African military treaties, an important aspect of ‘[Françafrique](#)’



Source: *Françafrique, explicit military history*, *wordpress.com*, 19 August 2016

In August 2017, Macron founded a [Presidential Council for Africa](#), composed of French and African members of [civil society](#) and the [African diaspora](#), to provide specialist advice on [France-Africa relations](#). Yet, apparently, this council served mainly as a public-relations measure to polish the tarnished image of [Françafrique](#) (Airault, & Glaser 2021). Too often, the new dialogue between France and Africa was focused on the economic and financial field. Moreover, the point of view of African actors was often of secondary importance or even absent, and primacy given to French interests, i.e. to the best way to promote and safeguard them or to ensure its expansion beyond the francophone ‘[pré carré](#)’ (Mbembe, 2021).

[Francophone Africa](#) has been characterized up to date by a lack of [government accountability](#). This has been due to the power and influence of the ‘[Messieurs Afrique](#)’, a term coined by [Antoine Glaser](#) and [Stephen Smith](#) in 1992, both in Francophone Africa and France (Glaser & Smith, 1992). French companies have often been favoured over other foreign firms, thus adding unnecessary additional costs of transactions with Francophone Africa. In case of doubt, French economic interests also often undermined calls for a democratic process (Pickett, 2017). French politicians regarded [Washington’s](#) and the [EU’s](#) rhetoric in favour of democratization with suspicion because of increasing competition with other global players, notably the [US](#) and [China](#) (Schraeder, 2000).

According to D. A. Yates from the [American Graduate School in Paris](#), France is the only member of the [UN Security Council](#) to have an explicitly ‘African policy’ (Yates, 2019)⁷. By an ingenious system of bilateral cooperation accords, France installed privileged access to its former African colonies not just in politics and the economic sector, but also in culture, education, natural resources, aid, trade, finance, security, defence, and a common currency. The latter is not only to the advantage of French ambitions to consolidate its hegemonic grip on its ‘*chasse gardée*’ in Africa, but it especially benefited a small predatory lobby of influential ‘*Messieurs Afrique*’ (Yates, 2019). This corresponds to the politics of [regulatory capture](#), i.e. a comprehensive market control in the interests of a minor constituency that passes off [rent-seeking](#) as the common public interest.

Regulatory capture

Examples of this resourceful approach to [regulatory capture](#) are manifold. For instance, a recent comparative case study of government accounting reforms in Anglophone and Francophone Africa ([Ghana](#) and [Benin](#)) revealed that the French approach could be conceptualized as ‘coercive’, and the British as ‘soft’ [Postcolonialism](#) (Hopper et al, 2019). The approach of the government in [Paris](#) has been characterized as comparable to ‘hard power’ and domination. That is, it forced a dependent state to do something, which, without coercion, it would not do. This included economic sanctions, coercive diplomacy, and – if necessary – even direct military intervention, despite public resentment and high political and economic costs. [Regulatory capture](#) encompassed trading privileges, enjoyed by French multinationals and accounting firms, and associated accounting practices. They perpetuated the socio-economic dependencies of colonial rule and encouraged a predisposition for French goods and services. Thus, the agreements not only imposed Paris' monetary policy (including the [CFA Franc](#)) but also the strategic placement of French administrators, functionaries and detached national experts (Hopper et al, 2019). Case studies of government accounting reforms meant to combat corruption and nepotism in [Benin](#) for example, revealed that the involvement of foreign experts could even aggravate the problem. Although the latter applied also to the ‘[structural adjustment](#)’ programmes imposed by [World Bank](#) and [IMF](#) all over SSA, the problem was especially virulent in [Francophone Africa](#). This, is all the more so, because the regulatory system, recommended by the IMF concerning local administration, was abandoned by Paris in favour of a French system, which ultimately proved to be even more problematic (Lassou & Hopper, 2016).

[Francophone Africa](#) has been dominated to date by the political, economic and cultural repercussions of [France’s colonial rule](#). A major instrument to assert France's interests was the upkeep of a common monetary policy and currency, the [CFA Franc](#). Thus, the [West African CFA franc](#) is [pegged](#) to the euro at a rate of F CFA 657.88 to €1. Although this has been increasingly resented by African politicians and economists, who wanted to replace it with a West African currency (the ‘[eco](#)’), the CFA still prevails, due to the social network of French and African political leaders and businessmen who benefit from the system.

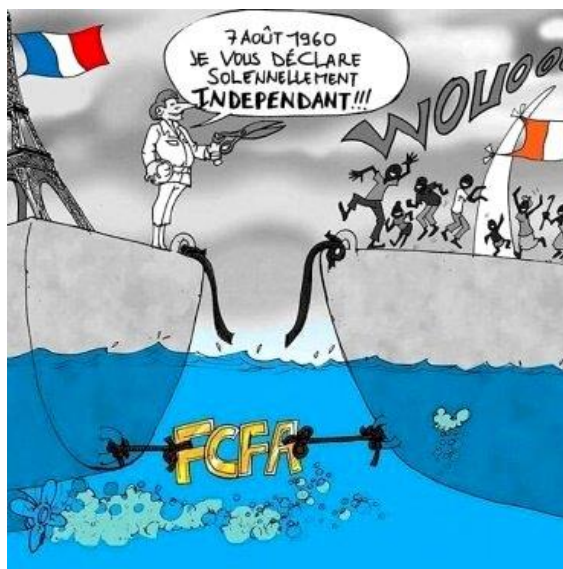
The controversial international discussion focuses up to date on questions of sovereignty and formal political and economic questions. However, the rules of the [informal sector](#) proved to be at least as crucial in structuring the [CFA zone](#) as the institutions and policies of the formal sector of the economy, including its monetary institutions. For decades, for example, prices of

⁷ Irrespective of this, other EU member states, like Germany, have their own [Africa policy guidelines](#).

French imports were overpriced, due to protection by [tied aid](#) and other political and cultural [non-tariff trade barriers](#). The cost of this [rent-seeking](#) was carried not only by the [French Treasury](#), which guarantees the [peg](#), but by the French and EU taxpayers, who financed budgetary [bail-outs](#) and [development aid](#), and last, but not least, by the poorer African member countries and social strata. Although this applies strictly speaking only to the [CFA zone](#), there are strong indicators that things haven't changed much since then for [Francophone Africa](#) in general.

Cartoon 4: The CFA franc:

*'on 7 August 1960, I solemnly declare you independent !!!'*⁸



Source: Yapsy

Apparently, countries previously under French rule are on average worse off than countries previously under British rule. A recent comparative study of the [Akron Williams Honors College](#) in Akron, Ohio, of two anglophone ([Ghana](#) and [Nigeria](#)), and two francophone ([Côte d'Ivoire](#) and [Cameroon](#)) countries revealed for example that Ghana outperformed Côte d'Ivoire concerning the [Human Development Index](#) (HDI) by a difference of over 20 countries. Cameroon edged out Nigeria by eight points (Gagne, 2020). Seven of the ten lowest-ranked countries concerning the HDI belonged to Francophone Africa. Moreover, [Burundi](#), [Niger](#), and [DR Congo](#) occupied the last three positions of all 187 countries included in the report (Ngugi, 2017). Also, the repercussions of rent-seeking impact negatively economic performance up to date. For example, growth levels have been significantly lower for two decades compared with [Anglophone](#) competitors (Ricart-Huguet, 2022; Kohnert, 2022).

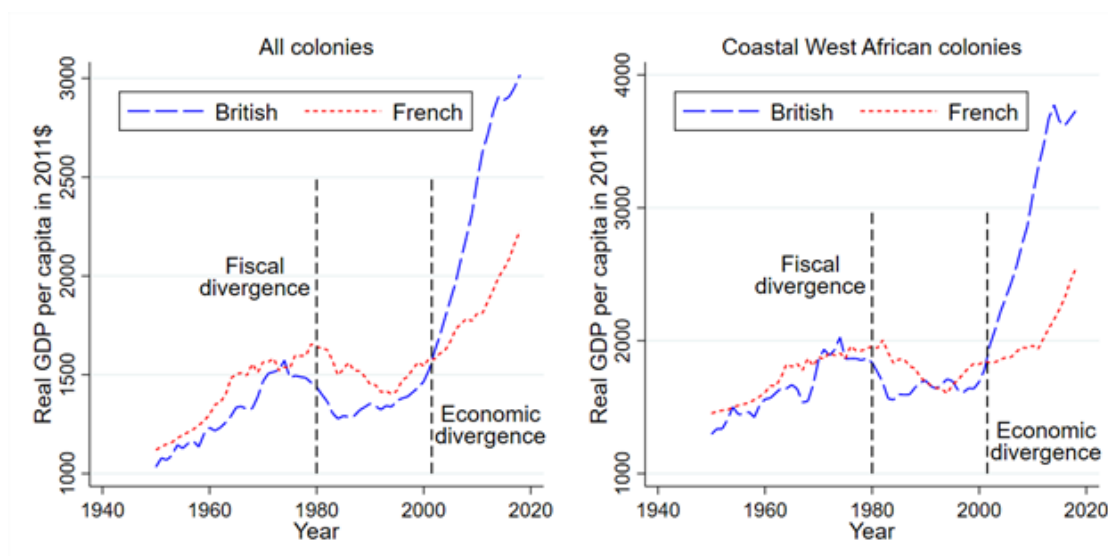
However, arguably, the higher growth rates in [Anglophone Africa](#) in the past decade might also indicate c. p. an erosion of the persistence of former colonial investments. For example, public investments *per capita* in education and health were higher in [Francophone Africa](#) (Ricart-Huguet, 2022). Moreover, colonial investments in Anglophone Africa were (even) more unequally distributed across districts than in Francophone Africa, which may have

⁸ Cartoon on the perpetuation of post-colonial dependence of former French colonies in Africa: "on 7 August 1960 I solemnly declare you independent!!!" - The Ivorian cartoonist Yapsy is the author of this caricature, which dates from 2016. - © (all rights reserved) - Source: <http://www.imgrum.org>.

created growth poles, stimulating overall growth in the former [British colonies](#), an advantage which may have been eroded in the past decade (Ricart-Huguet, 2021).

Concerning [institution-building](#), the divergence between Anglophone and Francophone Africa resulted in rival political and economic alliances, for example, [ECOWAS](#) and [WAEMU](#) ([UEMOA](#)) in West Africa. However, neither organisation had the expected spillover effects for the subregion as a whole. As for the francophone WAEMU, labour mobility slowed down, fiscal convergence was disappointing, the expansion of intra-regional trade remained modest, and competitiveness eroded (Boogaerde & Tsangarides, 2005).

Graph 3: Divergence of economic growth:
Anglophone and Francophone Africa



Source: Ricart-Huguet, 2022

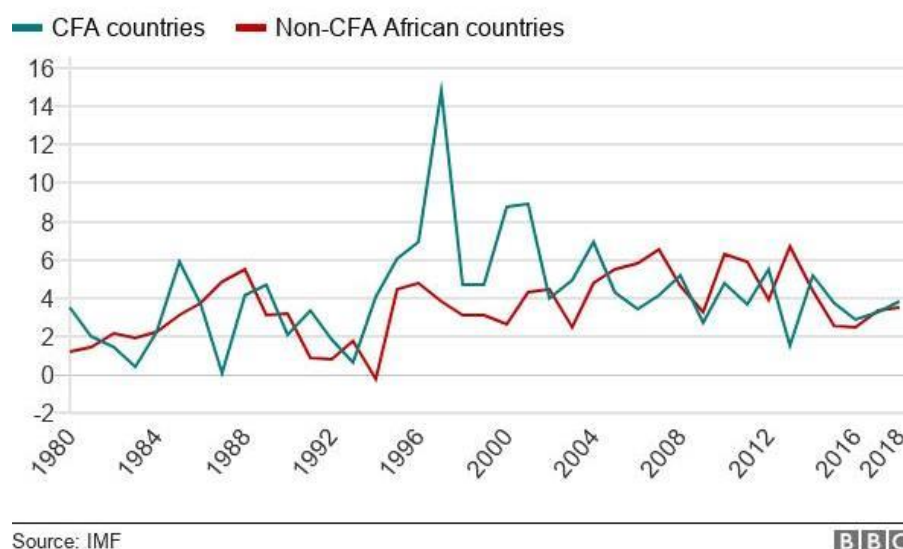
Therefore, it was no surprise that a growing resentment developed also against the unbroken dependency of Francophone Africa on the self-serving monetary policy of France in its former colonies employing the [CFA franc](#) as explained in the following (Kohnert, 2005; 2005a, 1994). Last, but not least, the Francophonie painted over the substantial differences between member states concerning its own history. Developed countries like [Canada](#), [Belgium](#) and [Switzerland](#) had never experienced French imperialism in the same way as African colonies. This lack of shared history precluded the sustainability of the Francophonie as a political peer community of equals (Jacob, 2013).

The CFA franc controversy

France imposed its own monetary policy and currency, the [CFA franc zone](#), to its colonies that prevail up to date. It consists of two economic and monetary unions with two separate CFA francs. In francophone West Africa that comprises the West African Economic and Monetary Union [WAEMU](#) (UEMOA, in French) bloc within the [ECOWAS](#). The [West African CFA franc](#) is managed by the Central Bank of West African States ([BCEAO](#)). Along the same lines the [Central African CFA franc](#), issued by the Bank of Central African States ([BEAC](#)) is organized under the Central African Economic and Monetary Community ([CEMAC](#)).

To counteract post-colonial dependency, the [West African Monetary Zone](#) (WAMZ) was founded in December 2000, to create a monetary union and later on a common currency, the [eco](#), for ECOWAS to facilitate trade, lower transaction costs and ease payments amongst Ecowas' 385 million people. However, critics worried that Nigeria, the region's biggest economy, would dominate monetary policy and impede the projected benefits.

Graph 4: How did CFA franc economies fare compared to the rest of Africa?
(Average GDP growth over time)



The introduction, however, was delayed multiple times. Already in July 2019, the leaders of the sub-region had adopted a proposal to introduce a single currency, labelled '*eco*', originally restricted to the [West African Monetary Zone](#) (WAMZ), for the entire ECOWAS by 2020. In the first phase, the Anglophone countries with their own currencies ([Gambia](#), [Ghana](#), [Guinea](#), [Nigeria](#) and [Sierra Leone](#)) were to launch the *eco*. In a second phase, the eight [UEMOA](#) (WAEMU) member countries that have in common the [CFA franc](#) ([Ivory Coast](#), [Senegal](#), [Burkina Faso](#), [Mali](#), [Togo](#), [Niger](#), [Benin](#) and [Guinea-Bissau](#)) should follow suit. However, in December 2019, the French and Ivorian presidents, [Emanuel Macron](#) and [Alassane Ouattara](#), surprisingly declared that the (Francophone) [WAEMU](#) member states would abandon the CFA first to adopt the *eco*, irrespective of WAMZ Anglophone member states, by unilaterally transforming the CFA franc to *eco* by 2020. This caused a sharp protest of the latter, notably [Nigeria](#), the by far biggest of West African countries, because [Abuja](#) suspected Paris to continue its one-sided Africa policy and its post-colonial relations under the disguise of assisting an 'independent' West African currency (Ibrahim, 2020). In May 2020, the [French Council of Ministers](#) passed a bill that prepared the way to abandon the West African CFA franc for the *eco*. The bill has still to be confirmed by the parliaments of WAEMU member states and France. Characteristically, it did not address one of the most controversial aspects of the CFA, i.e. the linkage of the currency to the monetary policy of Paris and the [fixed parity](#) with the [Euro](#). Thus, Paris undermined the long-lasting ambitions of WAMZ member states with its [divide-and-rule](#) policy. In June 2021 the ECOWAS announced 2027 as the new date to launch the *eco*. However, further delays are probable because of the repercussions of the [COVID-19 pandemic](#), the [Mali crisis](#) and growing threats of [Islamist terrorism](#) (Kohnert, 2022a).

According to a survey by [Afrobarometer](#) on the much-criticised [F CFA](#) currency, published on 13 February 2019, for example, two out of three [Togolese](#) believed that the CFA should be replaced. 66% responded that the currency profits France more than members of the Franc zone such as Togo. The richest and most educated among the surveyed were most hostile to the [post-colonial](#) currency (73%). Accordingly, at a meeting of ECOWAS in November 2019, the eight [West African](#) states of the [WEAMU](#) (UEMOA) adopted a proposal to withdraw their currency reserves from the French central bank. This evoked controversial reactions, notably among critics of the CFA franc, including Togo's [Kako Nubukpo](#), ex-officer at the Central Bank of West African States ([BCEAO](#)) and former Togolese minister.

Last but not least, the [peg](#) of the [Franc CFA](#) encouraged massive capital outflows. This was also supported by the gradual strengthening of the [Euro](#) against the [US\\$](#) since April 2021 which favoured imports to the detriment of the export market. Before, the volatility of the US\$ vis à vis the Euro had been the main reason for the harsh 1994 [CFA franc](#) devaluation that had caused widespread social and political unrest in [WAEMU](#) (UEMOA) member states. In December, Nubukpo was dismissed from the [OIF](#) because of his critical remarks both on the CFA Franc as well as on French President [Emmanuel Macron](#) and the latter's alleged dishonourable remarks for African leaders (Kohnert, 2018).

Integration into the franc zone is still mainly justified for political rather than economic reasons. This encompassed trading privileges, enjoyed by French multinationals and accounting firms, and associated accounting practices. They perpetuated the socio-economic dependencies of colonial rule and encouraged a predisposition for French goods and services. Thus, the agreements not only imposed [Paris'](#) monetary policy (including the [CFA Franc](#)) but also the strategic placement of French administrators, functionaries and detached national experts (Hopper et al, 2019).

Example of the persistence of the '[Messieurs Afrique](#)': Le Paris-village

In April 2018 the French daily [Le Monde](#) revealed details about a notable corruption scandal of international dimensions. Apparently, the ruling [Gnassingbé clan](#) of Togo was probed by the French justice in connection with the [Bolloré affair](#). The notorious French tycoon [Vincent Bolloré](#), a prominent member of [Françafrique](#), had been suspected of having secured port concessions in [Lomé](#) by undercharged services (800,000 € for merely 100,000 €) provided by the international advertising agency [Havas](#) (up to 2017 a 60% dependency of [Bolloré](#), then sold to [Vivendi](#)) to help [Faure Gnassingbé](#) elected in 2010 (Kohnert, 2022a). On 26 February 2021, Bolloré pleaded guilty to being culpable of active corruption. After all, this would condone state capture by the almighty Bolloré group, its vassals and political allies like [Jacques Dupuydauby](#), an equally well-connected French tycoon of the post-colonial network [Françafrique](#). He, and the notorious layer and presidency advisor, [Charles Debbasch](#), assisted by their local ally Charles Kokoufi Gafan, who married one of the daughters of President [Faure](#), collaborated closely to collect bribes and kickbacks from Dupuydauby's and many other's businesses in Togo, for distribution to President Eyadéma, his family and entourage. Bolloré and Dupuydauby apparently considered Togo as their personal *chasse-gardée*. The president and his extended family, key members of his entourage, politicians, police and military, they all benefited from all sorts of bribes, jobs, or preferential business opportunities the state could bestow (Weir & Vescovacci, 2022; Kohnert, 2022).

3. Rival networks: Francophonie and Commonwealth

The relations between [France](#), the [Francophonie](#) and the [Commonwealth of Nations](#) underwent successive periods of change. The [Fashoda syndrome](#), referring to the confrontation between the British and French troops in southern Sudan in 1898, shaped French attitudes up to now to prevent Commonwealth influence in [Francophone Africa](#), believing their interests to be mutually-exclusive ([France and the Commonwealth of Nations](#), Wikipedia). To uphold its claims, the Francophonie spent ten times as much per inhabitant as the Commonwealth (€ 0.30 vs. € 0.03; Auplat, 2003). Since the end of the [Cold War](#), policy changes in the [Francophonie](#) have been mostly driven by external factors, such as the effort to combat Anglo-American cultural hegemony. Policy continuities, on the other hand, were primarily attributed to France's historical affinities with Africa, the [Françafrique](#) network and its notion of its place in the world and its understanding of the role of the state (Ager, 2005).

As for the key function of a common language, France and the Francophonie could match the hegemony of English only by playing on the multilingual situation of Europe and by forming alliances with other important European languages, notably German-speaking trading partners with Africa (Batho, 2001).

However, concerns in both [Paris](#) and [London](#) over their relative power on the international stage pushed both to work more closely together with African regional and sub-regional organisations. In 1998, during the [Franco-British summit in Saint-Malo](#), both governments declared their intention to set aside their century-old rivalry to pursue joint cooperation *vis à vis* their former colonies in Africa (Torrent, 2011; Chafer, 2016). Yet, improved cooperation has been largely limited to the security domain, particularly in the case of [ESDP](#) military missions in Africa and the training of African peacekeepers (Cumming, 2016). While both countries worked more closely together with African regional and sub-regional organisations to make up for their decreasing power on the international stage, their divergent interests and foreign policy priorities persisted and ultimately limited the extent of cooperation (Chafer, 2016).

To uphold and consolidate their stakes in the region, distant actors like France and the UK try to legitimize their claims by using regional organisations as a kind of '[Trojan horse](#)' to reproduce their post-colonial structures. Thus, Paris participated in region-building processes in SSA from the inside rather than the outside by holding an informal status of a quasi-member in regional governance structures, e.g. in the [WAEMU](#) (UEMOA) and the [CEMAC](#). It required local agency by influencing political elites that actively embed the external actor within the region and its governance (Mattheis, 2021).

Concerning the [trade effect](#) of the colonial legacy, Francophone countries were associated with four times more trade in goods, last, but not least, because of [tied aid](#), while Commonwealth membership was found to increase services exports by 56.2% notably with African [LDCs](#) (Shingal, 2016). Regarding culture, language barriers and knowledge transfer the rival groups adopted different strategies to cope with these challenges. In this respect, foreign relations with [China](#) provided a telling example. Whereas Anglophone African countries preferred teaching English to their Chinese counterparts to improve communication, Francophone countries preferred to learn [Mandarin Chinese](#) (Ado, 2020).

Recently, the [Francophonie](#) had cause to be concerned again about competition with its old rival the [Commonwealth](#). Notably, [Paris](#) became extremely worried. Its traditional allies, the French-speaking [Maghreb](#) countries, even if not belonging to the [OIF](#), like [Algeria](#), were

redirecting their foreign economic relations versus [London](#). Moreover, the failure of [France's armed intervention in Mali](#) made French diplomacy feel bereaved (Canales, 2022). Moreover, in June 2022, [Togo](#) and [Gabon](#), both important pillars and organs of the [Françafrique](#) decided to join also the [Commonwealth](#) because of economic reasons, and other [West African OIF](#) members such as [Benin](#), [Côte d'Ivoire](#), [Guinea](#), [Senegal](#) and [Mauritania](#) might follow suit (Canales, 2022). These Francophone countries had evidently noted that most of the best-performing African economies belonged rather to Anglophone than Francophone Africa. Moreover, the move allowed the 'renegades' to redefine bilateral relations with the [UK](#) in the aftermath of [Brexit](#) (Kohnert, 2020).

Apart from this, bi-lingual [Cameroon](#) is a member of both the [OIF](#) and the [Commonwealth](#), like [Canada](#). The former Portuguese colony [Mozambique](#) was the first non-Anglophone African country that had joined in 1995 regarding its history of support of anti-apartheid efforts and because it wanted to diversify its engagements beyond the [Community of Portuguese Language Countries](#) as well as to improve its trade with the [Commonwealth](#) member countries, notably in [Southern Africa](#). [Rwanda](#), an OIF member state that had suspended foreign relations with France from 2006 to 2010, joined the [Commonwealth](#) in 2009 and even switched to English as the official language because of the alleged involvement of Paris in the [Rwandan genocide](#). African Member States of the [OIF](#) who have not French as official or current language include the following seven states ⁹:

- [Cap-Vert](#) (lusophone)
- [Egypte](#) (arabophone)
- [Gambia](#) (anglophone)
- [Ghana](#) (anglophone)
- [Guinée-Bissau](#) (lusophone)
- [Mozambique](#) (lusophone)
- [São Tomé and Príncipe](#) (lusophone)

However, the [Francophonie](#) was also trying to expand arbitrarily. This had been proved among others by Paris' rush to adopt the [eco](#), irrespective of whether Anglophone members of [ECOWAS](#) agreed. Notably, [Nigeria](#), whose economy accounted for two-thirds of ECOWAS's GDP, interpreted the unilateral move as a ploy by [France](#) to retain, and eventually expand, its influence in [West Africa](#) at its own expense and thus to acquire a disproportionate amount of influence over ECOWAS (see above; Fabricius, 2022; Ibrahim, 2020). However, the [Francophonie](#) and the [Commonwealth](#) have quite different approaches concerning cooperation with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs). The [Commonwealth](#) is definitely more open to interaction which becomes crucial at a time when [social movements](#) and [social media](#) increasingly challenge domestic and foreign politics (Auplat, 2003).

⁹ See Annexe Map 12 for additional details. Source: [Francophone Africa](#), fr.wikipedia

4. France's rivalry with China and Russia

Cartoon 5: China and Africa



Source: Boulon, *Pekin Express*, 22 September 2009 ¹⁰

[China](#) and [Russia](#) challenge the liberal order and [rule of law](#) on a global and regional level because of their noncritical stance regarding human rights violations in Africa and their economic support to African governments without imposing any conditions for democracy and [good governance](#) (Conteh-Morgan, 2015). The [Trump administration](#) (2017-2021) had facilitated the support of the move away from the liberal international order and the [Westphalian sovereignty](#) of states that America had defended for centuries. France perceived this development as a threat to its traditional hegemony in Francophone Africa.

Chinese competing interests in SSA

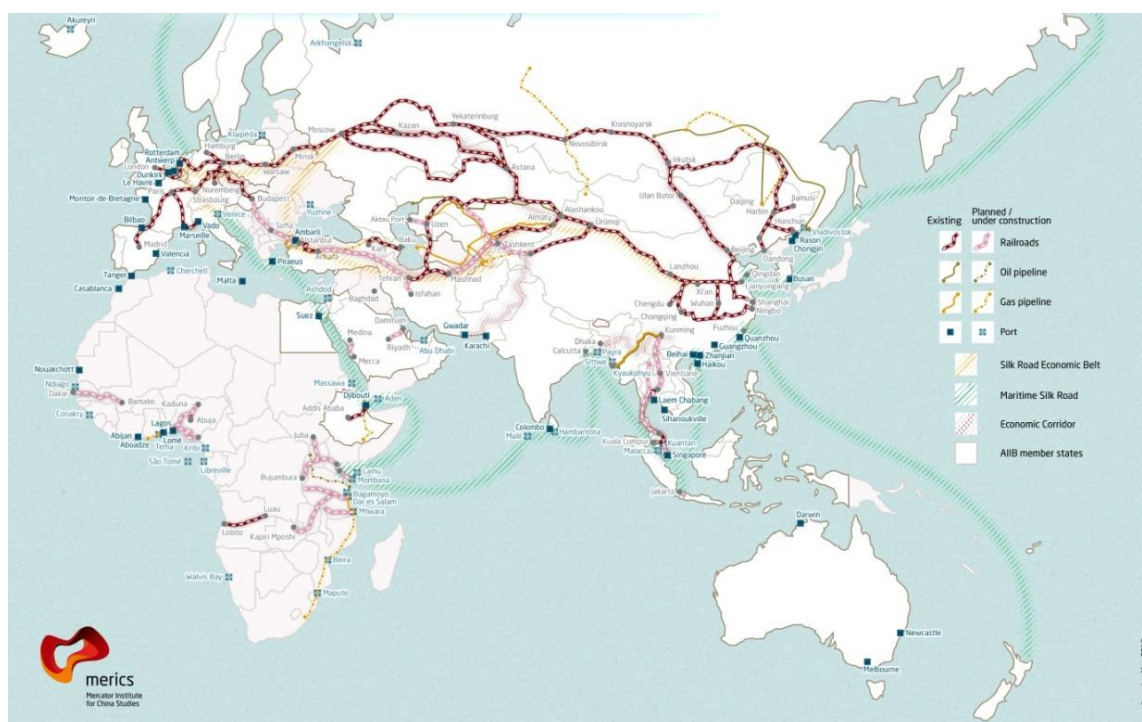
Because of [China's](#) extensive investment in [SSA](#), including its [Belt and Road Initiative](#), which reignited French economic and political interest there, and regarding the weakening cultural and linguistic linkages, challenged by the rising diffusion of English, France lost its privileged economic position in the African sub-region. It remained a hegemonic power mainly from a military perspective. Its future Africa relations will depend on Paris' possibilities to win out the competitors and regain its full hegemonic power in the sub-region which is very unlikely (Gaudino, 2018). This, the more so, because China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative also resulted in setting up China's first overseas military base in [Djibouti](#) which could be considered a template for Chinese port development all over Africa (Styan, 2020).

But also in the economic sector, Paris' [pré-carée](#) in Francophone Africa eroded considerably in the past decades. Whereas France was still the number one exporter to all its former African colonies in 2000 it could preserve this status in only three countries by 2017. China was the main challenger, notably in [Francophone West Africa](#), attracted by growth rates of more than 7 % in countries like [Senegal](#) and [Côte d'Ivoire](#). Chinese lending to these countries increased 332 % between 2010 and 2017, compared to 2000 - 09, and contracts awarded to Chinese firms trebled in value in the same period (Bayes, 2020). [Beijing](#) focused on [Senegal](#) as 'the gateway to West Africa'. It was the first West African country to join the [Belt and](#)

¹⁰ [Le Petit nègre](#), - accessed: 5 December 2022 - © Boulon (all rights reserved).

[Road Initiative](#) (BRI) that started in 2013, and all other Francophone West African governments except [Benin](#) followed suit. President [Xi Jinping](#), who visited [Dakar](#) in 2018, called Senegal a Comprehensive Strategic Partner. The growing Anti-French sentiment in West Africa offered fertile ground for Beijing's rhetoric, allowing it to present itself as a fresh alternative. Thus, Chinese companies moved into sectors that had been dominated by French enterprises like civil engineering, extractive industries, telecoms and ports. French multinationals like [Vinci SA](#), [Eiffage](#), [Orange S.A.](#), [Bouygues](#), [TotalEnergies](#), [Areva](#) and [Alstom](#), had to compete with China's giants, which benefited from the same kind of state patronage that Paris used to offer its companies. [Paris](#) counteracted by cautioning African governments of the inherent danger of insupportable Chinese debt. But President [Macron](#) also appealed to Beijing as a 'partner' in Africa, denying they were 'strategic rivals', and offered to reanimate Franco-Chinese cooperation in Africa, by shifting the focus to security and development cooperation, notably on climate (Bayes, 2020).

Map 4: The [One Belt One Road](#) network and its implications for Africa
China uses, acquires and builds railroads, ports and pipelines also in SSA



Source: Nantulya, 2019; the [Mercator Institute for China Studies](#)

Moreover, Chinese migrant entrepreneurial migrants in Africa, as well as their African counterparts in Africa and China, incorporated a globalisation from below in their very transnational economic practices. They became carriers of social and economic transformations in their respective host countries. In fact, the relations of Chinese and African petty traders and their mutual perception changed fundamentally since the xenophobe manifestations against 'the Chinese' in several African towns as well as mutual incomprehension of both in Chinese towns (mostly in [Guangzhou's](#) urban districts [Xiaobei](#) and [Sanyuanli](#)) where migrant African entrepreneurs arrived in the early 2000s. Many, if not most of them did not come to stay in the host country permanently, but they acted rather as sojourners, exploring the terrain in search of profitable trade, that is, Chinese imports of cheap consumer goods to Africa. Their mutual economic interest was based not so much on the general impact of political and economic globalisation but more specifically on the development of Chinese industrial production that facilitated African's access to the desired

Western products at an affordable price. The realm of these transformations covered a remarkable range, from specific access strategies to resources and social mobility, changing consumer behaviour, new norms and practices up to modifications of taste and ways of life (Giese & Marfaing, 2016; Kohnert, 2017).

Russian competing interests in SSA

Cartoon 6: 'France, get out!' - 'Hey! ... who says it's my hand?'



Source: Damien Glez ¹¹: 'Sahel: French plot vs. Russian plot?'

Russia's President, [Vladimir Putin](#), attaches great importance to rebuilding [Russia](#) as a world power, including relations with Africa. But while the [Soviet Union](#) used to advocate socialist modernization in Africa, [Moscow](#) no longer offers socialist ideologies. Instead, it focuses on access to African elites, particularly authoritarian leaders. It also seeks to sway elections in its favour, particularly in fragile but resource-rich states. The [Kremlin](#) said it wanted to avoid competing directly with other global powers active in Africa. Instead, it wanted to focus on countries where neither the West nor China dominates. There it is expected to be able to work more effectively. But Russia, like China, has been challenging Western norms and undermining US and EU sanctions. In addition, both strategic partners support non-interference in the internal affairs of states. In addition, Russia's relations with Africa have been motivated significantly by its interest in African resources and security markets.

Russia's resurgence in Africa benefits not least from [Islamist terrorism](#), for example, in the [Sahel](#), [Somalia](#) and [Mozambique](#). It uses fragile states and ongoing conflicts to secure lucrative arms deals and mining concessions. Moscow signed military cooperation agreements with 21 African governments, including negotiations on establishing military bases. It uses paramilitary contractors to manipulate the course of local conflicts in its favour. In return, Moscow can count on the support of African leaders in foreign policy. Thus, [Eritrea](#) voted against a UN General Assembly resolution strongly condemning Russia's war in Ukraine. 18 other African countries abstained, including [Mali](#), [Mozambique](#), [Angola](#) and [South Africa](#) (Kohnert, 2022b).

¹¹ © [Damien Glez](#), 2020, [Jeune Afrique](#), 15 January 2020. © (all rights reserved). Glez is an internationally renowned Franco-Burkinabe cartoonist and columnist.

Map 5: Russia's military presence in Africa in 2019



Source: Lévesque, 2020

African regions with limited statehood and [failed states](#), where violent conflicts threatened regional security and stability, became the gateway for Russia's intrusion. [Moscow](#) benefited from the resulting power vacuum and focused on countries that were formerly French and Portuguese colonies, which [Moscow](#) believed are easier to infiltrate.

Graph 5: Russian trading partners in SSA, 2019
(Russian Imports: US\$ 3.3 bn; exports: US\$ 678 mio.)

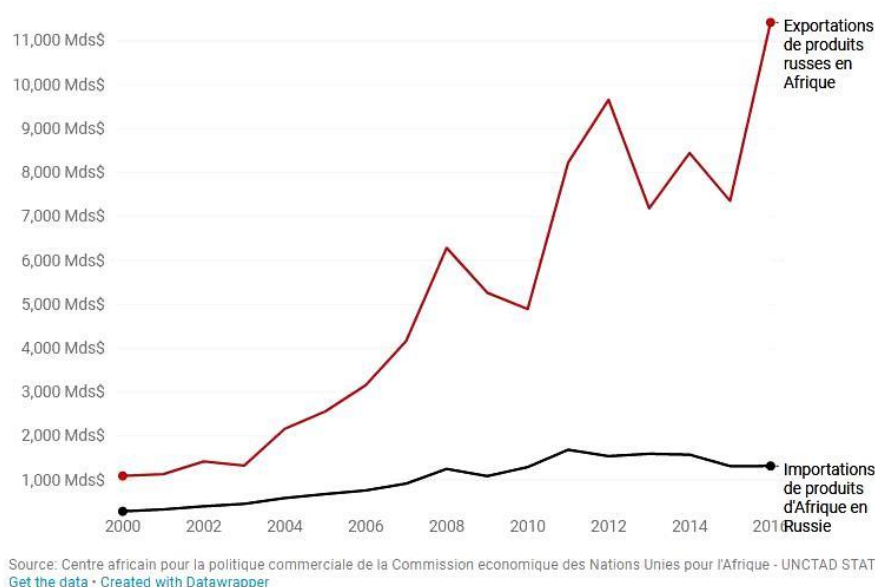


Source: Guensburg, 2022; World Bank / UN

Under these conditions, [Putin](#) was free to exploit the political and social contradictions in Africa and destabilize the Western order, even at the risk of the rise of [Islamic terrorism](#). Terrorist criminal pipelines and corrupt states have been exploited by Russian arms dealers across Africa for decades. These included notorious support for the [Taylor regime](#) in [Liberia](#) in the early 2000s, including the infamous Russian arms dealer [Viktor Bout](#), dubbed the ‘merchant of death’. The cooperation was based on state control of ports of entry and exit for criminal organizations to safeguard profit-sharing, diplomatic passports, including associated immunity, and the rule of law, which ensured the smooth marketing of these companies.

Today, Russia benefits primarily from providing ‘security’ to autocratic leaders, e.g. in [Mali](#), including arms sales, advice and training in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations against Islamic terrorism in exchange for access to African resources and markets. Moscow is particularly interested in the Horn of Africa to control important trade routes of global importance. All this undermined French interest in SSA (Kohnert, 2022c).

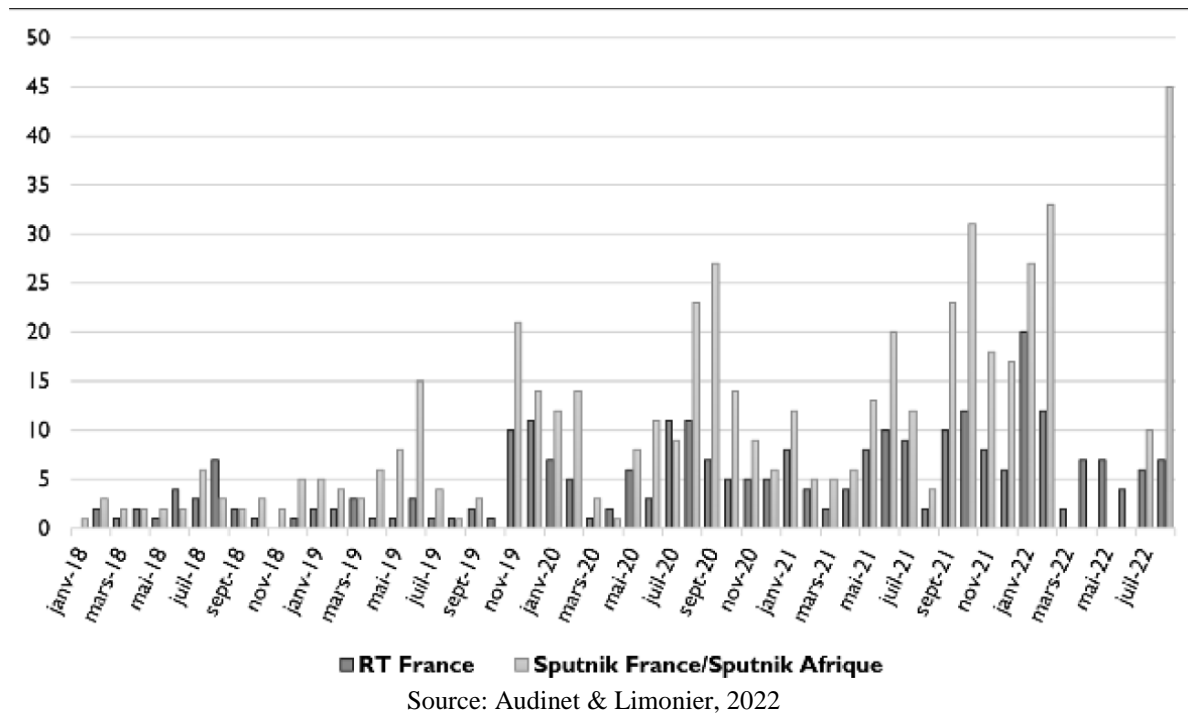
Graph 6: Growth of Russian-African trade, 2000 – 2016, in US\$ bn



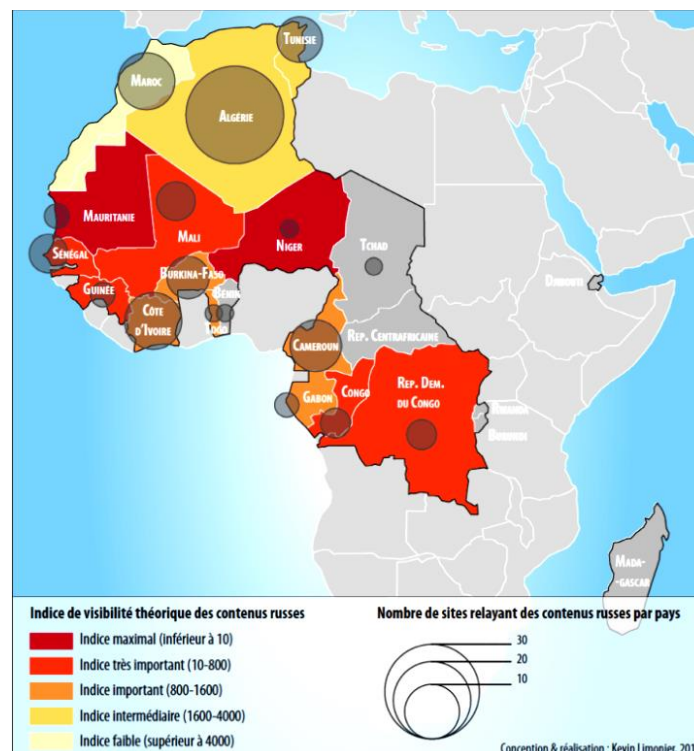
Source: Faivre, Agnès (2018)

Since the [Russia-Africa Summit](#), in [Sochi](#) in October 2019, which marked Russia’s return to Africa, [Moscow](#) also used its information systems, notably [Russia Today](#) (RT) and [Sputnik](#) news agency, to influence public opinion in Francophone SSA (Audinet & Limonier, 2022). Apparently, they enjoyed a much better reputation in the view of their African audience than in Western countries. In 2020, Russian foreign broadcasting received more than the equivalent of € 420 m from the federal budget, i.e. 34 % of public subsidies granted to the media. Thus, Moscow invested proportionally much more in its international media than Paris with 7 % of its credits allocated to these media, including [France 24](#) and Radio France International ([RFI](#)).

Graph 7: Russian media presence in France and Africa compared ¹²



Map 6: Visibility of Russian content in the web of Francophone Africa ¹³

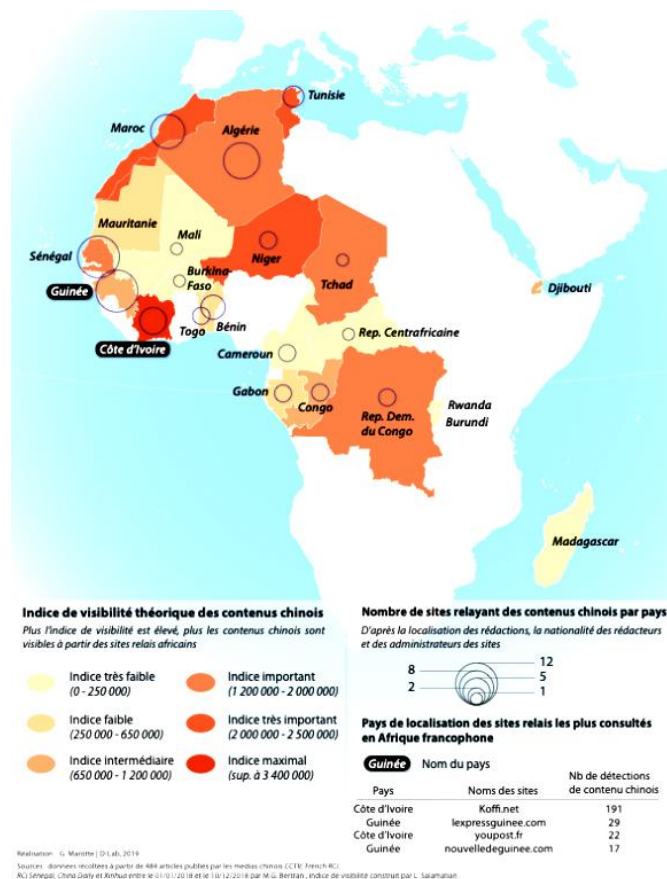


Source : Douzet et al., 2020

¹² Monthly volume of articles published under the tag “Mali” on the sites of RT France, and Sputnik France/Sputnik Africa between January 2018 and August 2022 (Audinet & Limonier, 2022).

¹³ Theoretical visibility of Russian content in the web of Francophone Africa and relay sites by country.

Map 7: Dissemination of Chinese content in Francophone African web ¹⁴



Source : Douzet et al., 2020

Moreover, Russia used the geopolitical influence of Russian oligarchs, businessmen and political entrepreneurs who supported Russia's official agenda through actions in the private sphere, like the oligarchs [Konstantin Malofeïev](#) and [Evgueni Prigojine](#), nicknamed 'the cook of the Kremlin', whose interests go far beyond the strict informational manipulation of African auditors and the African media and political framework. The former has been on the list of personal sanctions imposed by the US, EU, and Canada since 2014. Ukraine even put Malofeev on the international wanted list in 2017, accusing him of creating illegal paramilitary groups. The latter is said to be the creator of the [Wagner mercenary group](#) as well as the [Internet Research Agency](#), the 'Trolls from Olgino', a Russian propaganda agency, renowned for its systematic disinformation and [fake accounts](#) on major [social networking sites](#). All this illustrated how Russian influence was increasingly intermediated and subcontracted (Audinet & Limonier, 2022).

Similar tactics were used by China (Douzet, et al, 2020) and of course also by Western global players who, however, were more in line with French media.

¹⁴ With an overrepresentation of Ivorian and Guinean relay sites.

5. Prospects of self-determination of Francophone countries in SSA

French is now the fifth most spoken language globally and still growing, thanks to Africans. The more than 100 million French-speaking people in Africa represent almost half the number of French speakers worldwide (Chutel, 2018). At the same time, the [Francophonie](#) is challenged by intense international competition, complex geopolitics and greater demands for self-determination across [SSA](#). Therefore, many African governments attempted to strike a better deal in their external relations between East and West, employing a see-saw policy, already applied with success during the [Cold War](#). This complicated the playing field for French foreign policy even further (EIU, 2022).

Especially China and Russia challenged France-Africa relations. But also conflicting interests within the [EU](#), e.g. between [Italy](#) and France, on the strategic involvement in [Libya posed](#) a challenge. On 23 January 2019, Italy's right-wing Deputy Prime Minister [Matteo Salvini](#) criticised France's alleged 'apathy' toward stabilizing Libya, asserting that this was probably because it had oil interests opposed to those of Italy. Moreover, France-Africa relations were impaired by the divergent Africa policy of EU member states, including the immigration issue (Signé, 2019).

On the other hand, the perspectives of self-determination of Francophone African countries improved because France increasingly faced a backlash from parts of African societies over French post-colonialism as well as over Western dominance and the West's intrusion in African domestic affairs in general (EIU, 2022). Since the revolt of the [Arab Spring](#) in 2011, elections and election campaigns re-coined for example also Senegal's social movements. Young activists protested against incumbent President [Abdoulaye Wade](#) and his entourage who tried to establish a third presidential mandate against [constitutional limitations](#) to two successive mandates and to prepare in addition his succession by his son. This triggered vehement opposition of a new non-partisan youth movement called [Y'en a mare](#) ('I am fed up') under the slogan '*don't touch my constitution*' (CIIP, 2018). The movement had spread-effects to the whole of [Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa](#) (Ndiaye, 2020). The movement was inspired by the heroes of the West-African anti-colonial liberation struggle, notably [Amilcar Cabral](#) of neighbouring [Guinea-Bissau](#), and the [Burkinabé](#) President [Thomas Sankara](#), both murdered by their adversaries (CIIP, 2018). Although [Y'en a mare](#) was structured relatively hierarchically to enhance its vigour it tried to compensate for this through regular meetings representative of grassroots groups (Kohnert, 2022d).

[Y'en a mare](#) became a member and spokesperson of the [African Social Forum](#) (since 2012), and it inspired African activists to create similar youth movements in [Burkina Faso](#) ([le Balai citoyen](#), in English '*the Citizen's broom*'), in [DR Congo](#) ([Lucha](#) and [Filimbi](#)), in [Mali](#) ([Sofas](#)), in [Togo](#) ([Athiame](#)), in [Gabon](#) (*that's enough that*) (CIIP, 2018). The 2014 revolts in Burkina Faso, when Compaoré tried to run for a third term despite the provisions of the constitution, similar to the Senegalese President Wade before, fuelled again youth protest movements in Senegal. They understood that their own identity and their voter card could be decisive to influence their own future and that of their country, as shown by the unprecedented increase in voter turnout between 2012 and 2019 in Senegal. [Y'en a marre](#) published a list of grievances for the next presidential five-year term. They demanded President [Macky Sall](#) to resign from the presidency of his party ([APR](#)) to organize a transparent and credible audit of the electoral lists and institutional reforms, including the independence of justice (Kohnert & Marfaing, 2019). Because the mobile telephone penetration rate had exceeded 100 % already in 2016 social movements like [Y'en a marre](#) were able to act largely independently of traditional media (CIIP, 2018; Kohnert, 2022d).

Cartoon 7: *AfriqUPrising!* Democracy and protest movements in Africa



Source: Ba, 2021¹⁵

Y'en a marre proposed a redefinition of the country's social contract by considering new forms of consensual democracy and the institutionalization of the political role of marabouts (Veilleux, 2021). However, the leaders of the movement were economically and socially in a privileged position, compared with their rank-and-file activists, and the complex and often abstract demands of the former were not entirely shared by the latter (Veilleux, 2021).

The protest movement benefited from Senegal's socio-political history favouring conditions for collective action, such as a long history of youth activism, political openness, and media pluralism. *Y'en a marre* and other movements clearly expressed their opposition to President Sall's third candidature in 2024. In March 2021, the country experienced unprecedented violent riots with members of *Y'en a marre* at the forefront (Dimé, 2022; Kohnert, 2022d).

Y'en a marre was not the only social protest movement in Senegal. Other groups focussed on issues related to exploitation by foreign firms and countries, like *France Degage* with about 100,000 followers on *Facebook* (FRAPP, *Front pour une Révolution Anti-impérialiste Populaire et Panafricain*, Dakar) and *Cos M23*. They had catchy demands, e.g. the withdrawal of French military and oil firms like *TotalEnergies*. Thus, on 7 October 2022, the FRAPP protested in Gnith (Dagana Department) with victims of land-grabbing among the local population of 500 hectares. Other members demanded to prefer national fuel and other goods and services provided by Senegalese entrepreneurs, notably if company vehicles were concerned (FRAPP, *Facebook*, 8 October 2022). *Cos M23* was a political social media organization active in domestic politics that focused on linking certain sets of behaviours to being a good citizen. It was effective in coalition formation, protest mobilization, and engagement within civil society (Alltucker, 2018; Kohnert, 2022d). Within the framework of language and culture, Sub-Saharan francophone novels and movies could provide a medium to enable Africans to invent a new rationality, a new way of defining oneself in the face of the world, and to solve the problem of social inequalities which prevail in the postcolonial African Francophonie. In short, it could provide a way to hope for a better tomorrow (Nsangou, 2019; Bonhomme, 2020).

¹⁵ Ba, 2021 -© (all rights reserved). - [Heinrich-Böll Foundation](#), 2021.

6. Conclusion

As shown above, the demographic future of the [Francophonie](#) will be played out more and more in [Africa](#). Francophone countries that made up less than 3 % of the world population in 2000 may see their demographic weight increase to more than 8 % of the world's population by the middle of the 21st century. Whereas Africa was home to half of all the world's Francophones in 2010, it is expected that close to 84 % of French speakers will be found on the continent in 2060, i.e. more than half a billion of the 760 million Francophones in the world (Marcoux & Konaté, 2011).

However, neither the [independence movements of African people](#) in the 1960s nor the 'Second Wind of Change' in the aftermath of the [breakdown of the Soviet empire](#) in the early 1990s led to the [self-determination](#) of the people. Although the [fall of the Berlin Wall](#) triggered in some African Francophone countries [Sovereign National Conferences](#) with representatives of all social strata of the society, like in [Benin](#), [Togo](#), [Chad](#) and [Zaire](#), the people were denied the right to freely choose their sovereignty and international political status without external interference. [National independence](#) did not free the structures of governance from the colonial imaginary. Instability, violence and domination still structure the relationship between the state and its citizens (Barry, 2020).

Most African governments still depend on [foreign aid](#). They remain dependent 'quasi-states' reliant on the international community and development institutions, like the [IMF](#) and the [World Bank](#), and development aid policies, notably of Western governments. Bad government, civil wars, and widespread corruption are not solely home-grown but encouraged by existing international rules and extreme inequalities. This aggravated extreme poverty through [structural adjustment policies](#) of the IMF as well as protectionism and aggressive enforcement of intellectual property rights, e.g. in seeds and essential medicine. Corrupt and oppressive governments in [SSA](#) have been recognised as far as they were entitled to sell the country's resources and to dispose of the proceeds of such sales, to impose debt service obligations and thus to bind the country's present and future population, and even, in [authoritarian states](#), to use state revenues to buy the means of internal repression (Pogge, 2006; Kohnert, 2022d).

As soon as the vision of a 'Civilizing Process' ([Norbert Elias](#)) developed as a socio-cultural centralization process in [Francophone Africa](#) that embodied the 'civilised' and 'honourable human' with the claim to universal validity, the problem of 'the other' and the 'inferior' emerged. These categories are closely linked to the hegemonic realm, both as 'raw material' for the 'valorization' (*'mise en valeur'*) and as an opponent to be overcome, which points to the dominant culture. [Léopold Senghor's Négritude](#), for example, served to justify African alterity in relation to a French-European civilization norm that was perceived as overpowering. But it nevertheless implicitly accepted it as a model. For a long time, an anti-Western standard civilization which manifested itself, for instance, in the Arab-Islamic regions, did not prevail in [sub-Saharan Africa](#). Today, for many Africans, the [Francophonie](#) is a post-colonial ideology, both as a political doctrine, imposed by the official France, and as a cultural project. On the other hand, the [modernization ideology](#), still shared by many Africans, makes Africa's cultural heritage seem unsuitable for overcoming socio-economic crises. It reinforces the tendency to underestimate autochthonous traditions as a base for the development of [cultures of innovation](#) of the African poor and [self-determination](#) (Kirsch, 1998; Kohnert, 2011).

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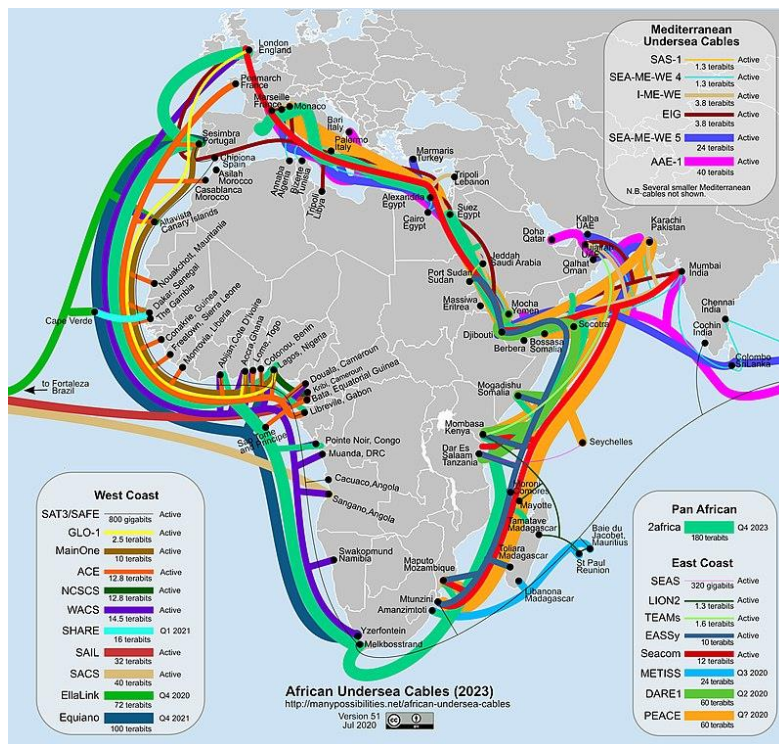
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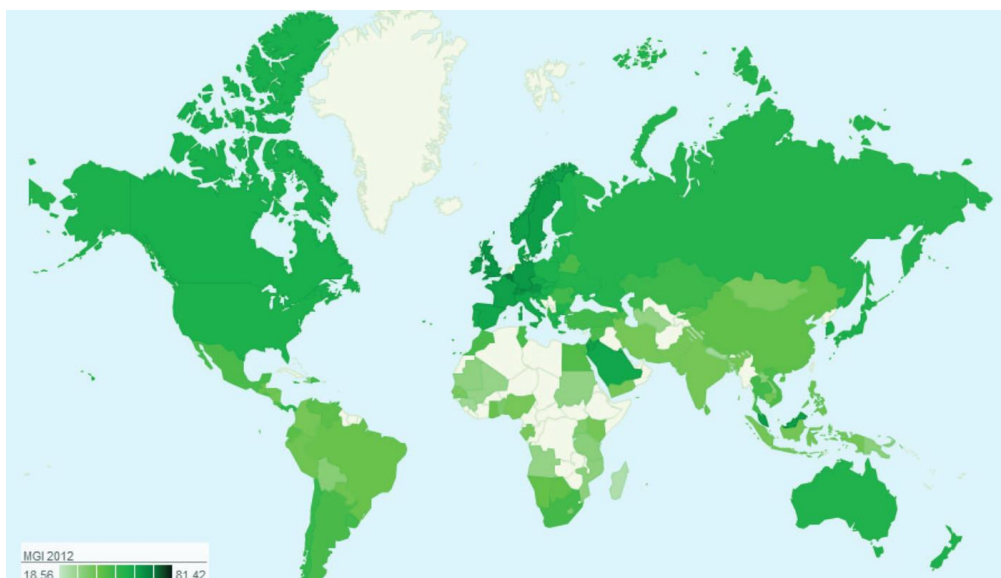
Annexe:

Map 8: Indicator of [Globalization](#) - African Undersea Cables (2023)



Source: [Globalization](#), en.wikipedia

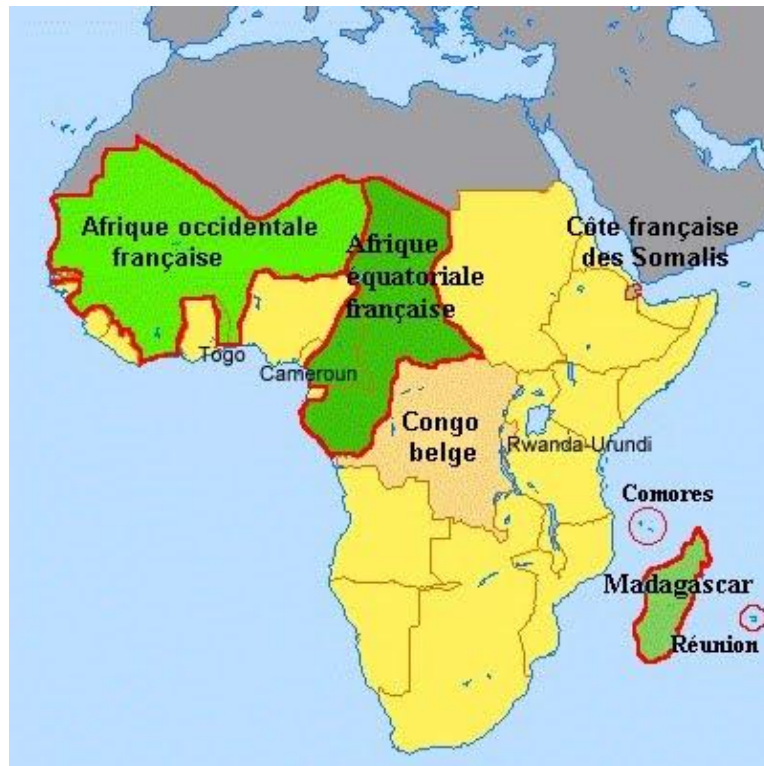
Map 9: World Map of [Maastricht Globalisation Index](#), 2012
taking into account also environmental factors¹⁶



Source: Figge & Martens, 2014 : 879

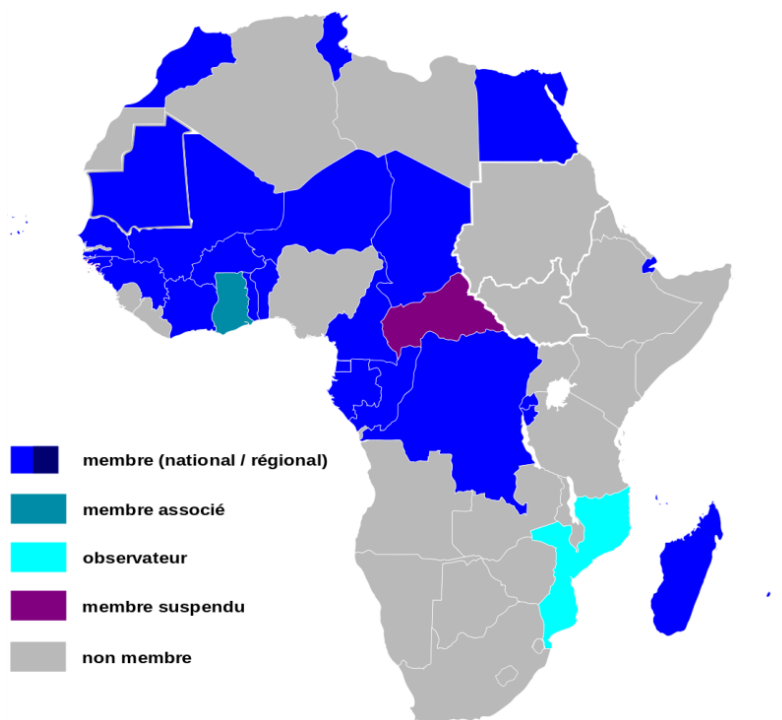
¹⁶ The most recent 2012 version of the MGI covers 117 countries. The main source of data was the [World Development Indicators](#) of the [World Bank](#).

Map 10: Colonial origins of Francophone Africa



Source: Pires, 2012

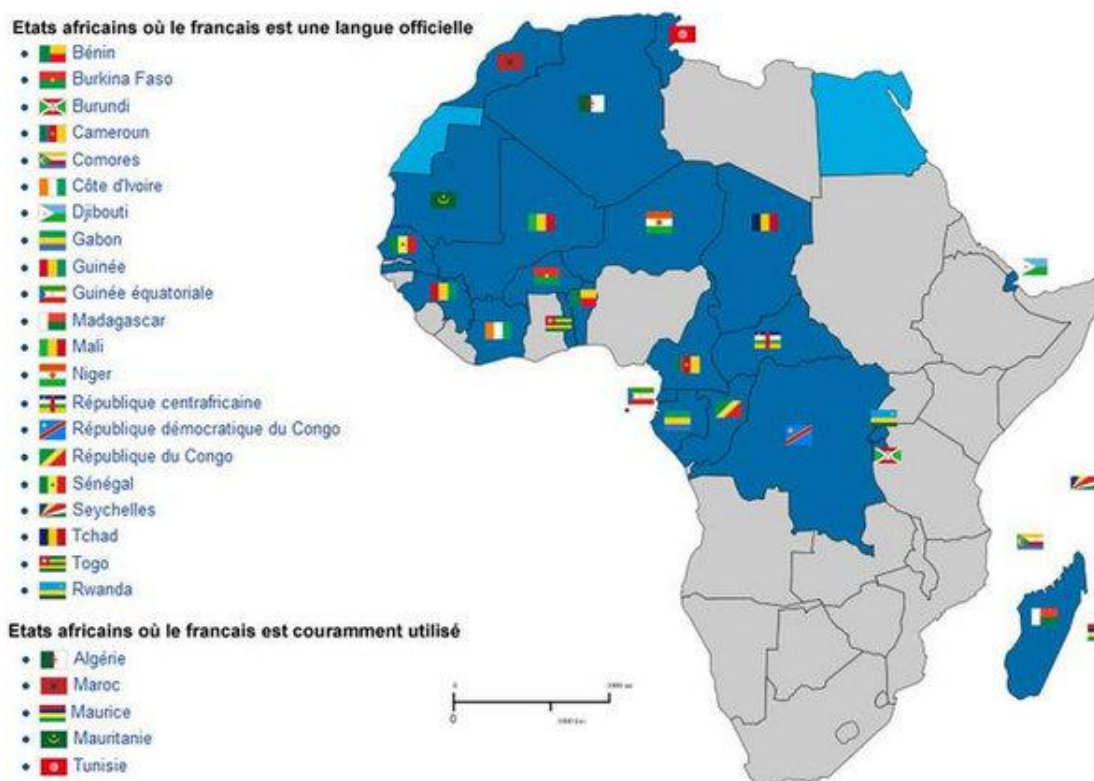
Map 11: Map of the Francophonie in Africa



Source : [wikimedia commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/), 2022

Map 12: Francophone African countries

Countries where French is official language and countries where French is currently used



Source: [Francophone Africa](#), fr.wikipedia

African Member States of the [OIF](#) who have not French as official or current language:

- [Cap-Vert](#) (lusophone)
- [Égypte](#) (arabophone)
- [Gambie](#) (anglophone)
- [Ghana](#) (anglophone)
- [Guinée-Bissau](#) (lusophone)
- [Mozambique](#) (lusophone)
- [Sao Tomé-et-Principe](#) (lusophone)

African states where French is not an official language but is widely used:

- [Algérie](#)
- [Maroc](#)
- [Maurice](#)
- [Mauritanie](#)
- [Tunisie](#)

Source: [Francophone Africa](#), fr.wikipedia

Résumé: [*Francophonie en Afrique subsaharienne : dépendance postcoloniale ou autodétermination ?*] – L'Afrique est aujourd'hui la partie la plus importante de la Francophonie. Le français est une langue officielle ou co-officielle avec d'autres langues dans 21 pays africains, tous en Afrique subsaharienne (ASS). Depuis la fin du colonialisme et de la politique de la guerre froide, les changements dans la francophonie ont été largement motivés par des facteurs externes, tels que la volonté de combattre l'hégémonie culturelle anglo-américaine. Les continuités, en revanche, tiennent principalement à l'affinité historique de la France avec l'Afrique, à sa vision de sa place dans le monde et à sa compréhension du rôle de l'État. L'Organisation internationale de la francophonie (OIF) défend les intérêts communs de l'espace francophone et impose une vision commune des réformes, notamment dans le domaine des conditions commerciales. Or, l'avenir démographique de la Francophonie se jouera de plus en plus dans les pays du Sud, notamment en Afrique. En 2010, la moitié des francophones du monde vivaient en Afrique. Il est prévu que d'ici 2060 près de 84% de la population francophone vivra en Afrique. La francophonie est principalement dirigée par l'élite francophone au pouvoir en France et en Afrique et par le tristement célèbre réseau Françafrique. Tous deux propagent l'universalité du français en tant que langue, y compris le pidgin français (appelé souvent de manière biaisée « petit-nègre »), la culture et le mode de vie. Bien que le sort de la francophonie africaine soit toujours déterminé par le nord, la forte mobilité de la population africaine, entraînée par une urbanisation croissante, signifie que le multilinguisme, par ex. l'usage simultané du français et des langues africaines, est « déterritorialisé ». Il serait donc crucial de résoudre le problème de l'interface entre le français et les langues africaines et d'identifier quelles autres langues pourraient remplacer le français et dans quels domaines cela serait le plus souhaitable. En dehors de cela, il existe des perspectives prometteuses pour un développement autodéterminé dans le domaine de la culture francophone de l'ASS. Le cinéma, la littérature et la religion africaine pourraient permettre de trouver une nouvelle rationalité africaine, une nouvelle façon de se définir et d'espérer un avenir meilleur, libéré des inégalités socio-économiques qui caractérisent la post-colonie francophone malgré la mondialisation. Ainsi, une culture viable, dynamique et véritablement africaine en ASS francophone pourrait égaler et même surpasser la culture rivale du Commonwealth. Bien que les deux puissances coloniales européennes, la Grande-Bretagne et la France, aient conquis de grands empires coloniaux en ASS en utilisant la langue comme moyen de contrôle, les réseaux résultants, le Commonwealth et la Francophonie, sont assez différents.

Zusammenfassung: [*Frankophonie in Subsahara-Afrika: Postkoloniale Abhängigkeit oder Selbstbestimmung?*] – Afrika ist heute der wichtigste Teil der Frankophonie. Französisch ist in 21 afrikanischen Ländern, alle im sub-saharischen-Afrika (SSA), Amts- oder Ko-Amtssprache zusammen mit anderen Sprachen. Seit dem Ende des Kolonialismus und der Politik des Kalten Krieges wurden die Veränderungen der Frankophonie weitgehend von externen Faktoren vorangetrieben, wie beispielsweise dem Bestreben, die angloamerikanische kulturelle Hegemonie zu bekämpfen. Kontinuitäten hingegen sind vor allem auf die historische Affinität Frankreichs zu Afrika, seine Auffassung von seinem Platz in der Welt und sein Verständnis von der Rolle des Staates zurückzuführen. Die Internationale Organisation der Frankophonie (OIF) verteidigt die gemeinsamen Interessen des frankophonen Raums und setzt eine gemeinsame Reformvision durch, insbesondere im Bereich der Handelsbedingungen. Die demografische Zukunft der Frankophonie wird sich jedoch immer mehr in südlichen Ländern, insbesondere in Afrika, abspielen. 2010 lebte in Afrika die Hälfte aller Frankophonen weltweit. Es wird erwartet, dass im Jahr 2060 fast 84 % der französischsprachigen Bevölkerung in Afrika leben werden. Die Frankophonie wird hauptsächlich von der frankophonen Machtelite sowohl in Frankreich als auch in Afrika und dem berühmten Netzwerk der Françafrique vorangetrieben. Beide propagieren die Universalität des Französischen als Sprache, einschließlich Pidgin-Französisch (voreingenommen oft als ‚petit-nègre‘ bezeichnet), Kultur und Lebensweise. Obwohl das Schicksal der afrikanischen Frankophonie bis heute vom Norden bestimmt wird, führt die hohe Mobilität der afrikanischen Bevölkerung, angetrieben durch die zunehmende Urbanisierung, dazu, dass die Mehrsprachigkeit, z. B. dem gleichzeitige Gebrauch von Französisch und afrikanischen Sprachen, ‚entterritorialisiert‘ wird. Daher wäre es von entscheidender Bedeutung, das Problem der Schnittstelle zwischen französischen und afrikanischen Sprachen zu lösen und festzustellen, welche anderen Sprachen das Französisch ersetzen könnten und in welchen Bereichen dies am wünschenswertesten wäre. Abgesehen davon gibt es vielversprechende Perspektiven für eine selbstbestimmte Entwicklung im Bereich der frankophonen Kultur des SSA. Die afrikanische Filmindustrie, Literatur und Religion könnten es ermöglichen, eine neue afrikanische Rationalität zu finden, eine neue Art, sich selbst zu definieren und auf eine bessere Zukunft zu hoffen, frei von sozioökonomischen Ungleichheiten, die die frankophone Postkolonie trotz Globalisierung charakterisieren. Somit könnte eine lebensfähige, dynamische und wahrhaft afrikanische Kultur im frankophonen SSA der rivalisierenden Commonwealth-Kultur gleichkommen oder sie sogar übertreffen. Obwohl beide europäischen Kolonialmächte, Großbritannien und Frankreich, große Kolonialreiche in SSA eroberten, indem sie Sprache als Mittel der Kontrolle nutzten, sind die daraus resultierenden Netzwerke, das Commonwealth und die Frankophonie, ziemlich unterschiedlich.