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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

#### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Krupova, K., & Cech, L. (2020). A Neo-colonialist French Foreign Policy in Africa? Insights from Côte d'Ivoire. *Studia Politica: Romanian Political Science Review*, 20(2), 291-317. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-69916-3>

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# A Neo-colonialist French Foreign Policy in Africa? Insights from Côte d'Ivoire

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## Abstract

The main aim of this paper is to analyse possible persistent French neo-colonialism in Africa. The first section deals with the theoretical framework of the term under scrutiny, followed by an analysis of the genesis of contemporary French foreign policy towards Africa by comparing the French presidential administrations, as well as analysing the persistent French military presence in Africa. The paper also focuses on the study of France's relations with African countries using the example of Côte d'Ivoire and of the French military intervention during the civil war in Côte d'Ivoire (2002). The paper discusses the main consequences of French interventions in the region, and the result of the analysis is a comprehensive assessment of current mutual relations and of the current French influence in sub-Saharan Africa.

**Keywords:** foreign policy, colonialism, Africa, France, Côte d'Ivoire.

## Introduction

In world history, we find several power struggles that have drastically transformed the international political arena, the boundaries of the conquered territory, and have significantly affected the indigenous peoples that had colonial powers under their control. France – as one of the most powerful colonial powers in modern history<sup>1</sup> – has conquered a vast area of sub-Saharan Africa until the formation of the national-liberation movements in the 1960s.

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<sup>1</sup> French colonial rule in the world took various forms from the beginning of the 17th century until the 1960s. At the time of the greatest colonial supremacy, only the British Empire exceeded the expansiveness of France. In History World, "History of the French

One of the most ambiguous issues and, at the same time, the main goal of our paper is to examine recent claims regarding whether the nature of the relationship between France and Africa can be qualified as “neo-colonialism” or not. From the methodological point of view, we focus on the comprehensive analysis based on the collected data which postulates arguments about a possible French neo-colonial influence in Africa. The most important aspect under the scrutiny is the correct examination of key elements of French foreign policy towards Africa. Thus, from the perspective of the content of the paper, apart from a significant historical aspect, a political-security determinant is crucial, as it has greatly shaped the current features of the interactions of the examined subjects across the history of Franco-African relations. To support our reflection on the issue, we consider a neo-colonial model operating predominantly with the above-mentioned determinant as the core of understanding the current French foreign policy towards Africa. We do not concentrate intensively on the social and economic aspects determining the direction of the current foreign policy towards Africa, because the scope of the submitted paper does not allow us to examine these areas in depth. However, we also consider some of the economic aspect of the analysis, in the case study of Côte d’Ivoire in the next section of the paper.<sup>2</sup>

The first section of the paper deals predominantly with the theoretical basis of neo-colonialism. We also place great emphasis on the genesis of contemporary French foreign policy towards Africa, by comparing the French presidential administrations, as well as by analysing the French military presence in Africa. The final part focuses on the analysis of France’s relations with an African country using the example of Côte d’Ivoire and the critical analysis of the French military intervention during the civil war in Côte d’Ivoire, as well as the evaluation of the current situation in this country, and an assessment of the consequences of French interventions in the region.

Despite its seemingly historical context, we would like to highlight the current impact of the former French colonial rule by analysing France’s current foreign policy towards Africa, and the multiple vectors that influenced the current state of mutual relations. Addressing Franco-African relations, President François Mitterrand said that “Without Africa, there would be no history in

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Empire,” accessed November 5, 2019, <http://www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?ParagraphID=oxy#132>.

<sup>2</sup> Obviously, e.g. the fact that the devaluation of the CFA franc in 1994, used by French-speaking African countries, contributed significantly to the development of French policy towards Africa. However, at the same time, there is no record that this would affect France’s military policy. Therefore, we do not pay too much attention to this issue in the next analysis of the work. In Kenneth B. Noble, “French Devaluation of African Currency Brings Wide Unrest,” *The New York Times*, February 23, 1994, <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/02/23/world/french-devaluation-of-african-currency-brings-wide-unrest.html>.

France in the 21st century,” which only proves that modern-day French political elites realize the importance of maintaining close relations with African countries.<sup>3</sup>

The current discourse on migratory flows to Europe is one of the most ‘pressing’ issues facing Europe today. The political debate on the migration crisis is, of course, linked to the former colonial ties of the largest European economies, including France, as migrants from the former colonies represent the highest percentage of immigrants to Europe. Despite the geographic proximity of France and the African continent, the issue is insufficiently debated in a Central European context. As our region lacks greater objectivity about the relevant causes of current immigration processes, we consider it necessary to analyse in more detail one of the precursors of the current state - the relationship of former colonies with their metropolises. In our opinion, this also significantly shapes the current domestic political environment of European countries in connection with migration and social inclusion of newcomers. Thus, with this paper we would like to interpret the main principles of French interventionism, as a similar study in this region is absent.

## Theoretical Background

The validity of colonialism has been the subject of scrutiny by many scholars, as it has been difficult for many theorists to evaluate ideas of justice with European sovereignty over “non-Western” nations. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the discrepancy between liberal ideas and colonial practice was most tangible, as Europe’s dominance over the rest of the world reached its peak at the time. The way in which the experts tried to reconcile these disparate concepts was to carry out partially positively-perceived Mission Civilisatrice.<sup>4</sup> Some scholars persuasively demonstrate that they entail such domination, but they have also implied idealist and progressive agendas for intervention in the interests of the colonized.<sup>5</sup> However, according to Afagla, the moral obligation of the people

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<sup>3</sup> Ronald Tiersky, *François Mitterrand: A Very French President* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2003), 92.

<sup>4</sup> This specific mission demonstrated the need for a temporary period of political and economic dependence until the ‘uncivilized’ society reached the point where it would be able to independently run the institutions and govern the territory. In Vincent Khapoya, *The African Experience* (London: Routledge, 2012), 117.

<sup>5</sup> For detailed analysis see e.g. David Lambert and Alan Lester, “Geographies of colonial philanthropy,” *Progress in Human Geography*, 28(3), (2004), 320–341, <https://doi.org/10.1191/0309132504ph489oa>; Harald Fischer-Tiné and Michael Mann, eds., *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission: Cultural Ideology in British India* (London: Anthem Press, 2004), 362.

from a more advanced civilization to improve “backward” people was regularly advanced to justify colonial expansion.<sup>6</sup>

The concepts of colonialism and imperialism are heavily used throughout the social sciences and humanities as part of critical theories; first and foremost, they owe much to Marxist thinking. Marx argued that capitalism represented a stage in the socioeconomic development of humanity which would be “utopianly” overthrown by a revolution of the working class. In 1916, Lenin specified that the extraordinary expansion of European imperialism around the world in the last decade of the 19th century had marked the highest stage of capitalism.<sup>7</sup>

After independence was granted to former African colonies, as result of a theory of modernization, postcolonial theorists sought answers for the continued underdevelopment of African countries in dependency theory.<sup>8</sup> Walter Rodney, an economic theorist of postcolonial Africa, states that after independence the main revenue base for African countries continued to be the export of raw materials which resulted in the underdevelopment of African economies, while Western industries thrived.<sup>9</sup> This fact contributed to the broader debate concerning the ‘new-born’ term regarding postcolonial studies – “neo-colonialism”. Amongst first – Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of independent Ghana –, in his peculiar and controversial work with Marxist, and simultaneously pan-Africanist influence, *Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism*, argues that “the neo-colonialism of today represents imperialism in its final and perhaps its most dangerous stage”, and thus he defines neo-colonialism as “the continuation of external control over African territories by

<sup>6</sup> Kodjo Afagla, “Shattering the civilizing claims of colonialism: George Lamming’s Natives of my person,” accessed April 21, 2020, <http://publication.lecames.org/index.php/lit/article/view/706>.

<sup>7</sup> According to Lenin’s philosophy, the end of imperialism, as the result of World War I, would mark the beginning of the end of capitalism. Nevertheless, European empires persisted well into the 1960s. In Vladimir I. Lenin, “Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism,” accessed April 21, 2020, [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/125485/6000\\_Imperialism\\_Highest\\_Stage\\_Capitalism.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/125485/6000_Imperialism_Highest_Stage_Capitalism.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Dependency theory first gained prominence as way to explain the underdevelopment of Latin American economies in the 1960s which persisted because highly developed countries dominated underdeveloped economies by paying low prices for agricultural products and flooding those economies with cheap manufactured goods. This resulted in an unceasingly negative balance of payments that prevented underdeveloped countries from ever becoming competitive in the global marketplace. For more detailed analysis, see economic theorists, such as Mark Langan, *Neo-Colonialism and the Poverty of ‘Development’ in Africa* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 253; Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (London: Bogle-L’Overture Publications, 1973), 316.

<sup>9</sup> Neo-colonial theorists therefore proclaimed that economies based on the production of cash crops such as cocoa could not hope to develop, because the world system imposes a veritable ceiling on the revenue that can be accrued from their production. In Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (London: Bogle-L’Overture Publications, 1973), accessed April 24, 2020, <http://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/rodney-walter/how-europe/index.htm>.

newer and more subtle methods than that exercised under formal empire.”<sup>10</sup> The newest and most important form of colonial supremacy, he highlighted, was the diminishment of political freedoms of African countries at the expense of the economic influence of external forces.<sup>11</sup> The goal was the same as during colonialism; to maintain the former colonies in a dependent position which allows economic exploitation.<sup>12</sup> In Allen’s view-point from the American perspective, a neo-colonial situation was developing in the relationship between “whites and blacks” in the US.<sup>13</sup>

As Martin implies, a first official definition of neo-colonialism was provided by the All-African People’s Conference in the 1961 Resolution on Neo-colonialism, defining it as “the survival of the colonial system in spite of formal recognition of political independence in developing countries, which become victims of an indirect and subtle form of domination by political, economic, social, military, or technical means.”<sup>14</sup>

According to Langan, a second method of understanding neo-colonialism is through foreign aid. Supporters of neo-colonial tendencies dispute that accepting loans from the “Western world” proved the link between independent African governments and the exploitative forces of former colonizers.<sup>15</sup> In this regard, Lumumba highlights that since the early 21st century, China has been perceived as a neo-colonial power, that does not appear to systematically respect the rules of western capitalism and political systems, and offers speculative forms of loans to various African countries. Moreover, he states that neo-colonialism is different from classical colonialism only in the sense that “it is an ideology that is applied to a different time and space with the same or different actors.”<sup>16</sup>

France endeavours in the long term to maintain its cultural legacy, with a significant portion of development funding going towards education,

<sup>10</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, “Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism,” accessed April 15, 2020, <https://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/nkrumah/neo-colonialism/introduction.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> Amongst other scholars who expressed similar concerns about Africa’s external relations, see e.g. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth (Les Damnés de la Terre)* (Paris: Éditions Maspéro, 1961), 311.

<sup>12</sup> Mbuyi Kabunda Badi, “El neocolonialismo en África. Sus formas y manifestaciones,” accessed April 20, 2020, <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=2163176>.

<sup>13</sup> Robert L. Allen, “Reassessing the Internal (Neo) Colonialism Theory,” *The Black Scholar*, 35:1 (2005), 2-11, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00064246.2005.11413289>.

<sup>14</sup> Guy Martin, “The historical, economic and political bases of France’s African policy,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 23(2) 1985, 189-208, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X00000148>.

<sup>15</sup> They note as evidence that most foreign aid has been given in the form of loans, bearing high rates of interest; repayment of these loans contributed to the underdevelopment of African economies because the collection of interest ultimately impoverished African peoples. For more information, see Langan, *Neo-Colonialism*, 253.

<sup>16</sup> Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo, “China-Africa Relations: A Neo-Imperialism or a Neo-Colonialism? A Reflection,” *African and Asian Studies*, n. 10: 2-3, 234-266, <https://doi.org/10.1163/156921011X587040>.

scholarships, and cultural institutes. La Francophonie is a truly neo-colonial concept, especially as it results in a specific type of identity building, though, as Martin points out, “to the extent that it implies the inclusion of people outside France in the culture of France itself.”<sup>17</sup>

Supporting Diana Haag’s thoughts about neo-colonialism, since the term supposes a combination of dependence in different forms, the presence of neo-colonialism is determined if some of the following criteria are present: (1) political interference, (2) economic influence, (3) financial dependence, and (4) military presence.<sup>18</sup> Besides all the undisputable economic and cultural connotations<sup>19</sup> of the term neo-colonialism, on the basis of Langan’s passage that “neo-colonialism is a situation of infringed national sovereignty and intrusive influence by external elements”, we are aware that a neo-colonial model can be perceived also by using the political-security determinant. For this purpose, the case study of French foreign policy towards Africa based on the example of Côte d’Ivoire forms the conceptual core of our work, as France was one of very few external forces with a military intervention during the civil war in the country.

## The Current French Foreign Policy Towards Africa

France’s strong motivation for maintaining a sphere of influence in Africa can be demonstrated in the following fragments. Indeed, in the 1950s, large reserves of iron and copper ore, gold and oil were discovered in West Africa. During the post-war period, these were strategic raw materials for France as well as for other powers governing these areas. France thus wanted to secure privileged access to these sensitive raw materials, specifically through French multinationals, which expanded their portfolio to the region of sub-Saharan Africa. According to Alexandr Ort,<sup>20</sup> agriculture, especially the

<sup>17</sup> Martin, “The historical, economic and political bases of France’s African policy,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 23(2) 1985, 189-208, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X00000148>.

<sup>18</sup> Diana Haag, “Mechanisms of Neo-colonialism: Current French and British influence in Cameroon and Ghana,” ICIP Working Papers, accessed April 27, 2020, [http://icip.gencat.cat/web/.content/continguts/publicacions/workingpapers/2011/arxiu/wp\\_2011-6\\_ing.pdf](http://icip.gencat.cat/web/.content/continguts/publicacions/workingpapers/2011/arxiu/wp_2011-6_ing.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> For detailed analysis see e.g. Kwame Nkrumah, “Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism,” accessed April 15, 2020, <https://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/nkrumah/neo-colonialism/introduction.htm>; Ahmed Sékou Touré, “Africa’s future and the world,” *Foreign Affairs*, 41, 141–151 (1962), DOI: 10.2307/20029606; Jack Woddis, *Introduction to Neo-Colonialism* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1967), 133.

<sup>20</sup> Alexandr Ort, *French colonial policy after World War II/ Francouzská koloniální politika po 2. světové válce* (Praha: Academia, 1968), 24.

cultivation and processing of peanuts, also played a major role.<sup>21</sup> The main exports of Côte d'Ivoire were coffee and cocoa, reflecting France's significant interest in maintaining a strong influence not only in the political dimension, but also in the economic one.

France also wanted to preserve the integrity of its colonial territory and its position as an important international player by creating a network of allied countries that, together with France, could play a major role in international politics. As Martin and Schraeder observe, the French influence used to work on the basis of a tight network of formal and informal institutions which enabled an indirect control over the local elite and bureaucracy.<sup>22</sup> In this network the major political decisions regarding Africa lied almost exclusively with the French President and his advisor for African Affairs and included regular encounters with African leaders and the organisation of biannual Franco-African summits.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, it was very important for France to maintain a military presence in Africa, which is also reflected in the security determinant of French foreign policy, a significant element of French engagement in Africa even today. The protection and promotion of economic and political interests is only possible if peace and stability are ensured in the country, as French diplomacy has recognized. For this reason, France has maintained a strong military base on the African continent, which is the subject of an examination of the paper as a possible form of "neo-colonialism". Therefore, the main aspect of the study of mutual relations is mainly the political-security determinant which has significantly influenced both the historical and current ties of the subjects concerned.

The highest diplomatic representative and the intermediary of French foreign policy in the world is the President. Under the Constitution of the Fifth Republic,<sup>24</sup> the President holds the position of Supreme Army Commander, so in practice he decides on military operations and country interventions at home

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<sup>21</sup> Senegal, one of the oldest colonies in sub-Saharan Africa, has become the seat of many French authorities, and Dakar has become a modern port and the administrative and cultural centre of the whole West Francophone Africa. In Ort, *French colonial policy*, 25.

<sup>22</sup> For better understanding, direct or indirect form of colonial rule is not exclusive for given colonial power. French colonists established also direct forms of rule in some parts of Senegal and indirect forms of rule in other parts. As Gerring et al. points out, Scotland and Wales enjoy greater autonomy from Westminster than does England; and Catalonia enjoys more independence from Madrid than does Andalusia. In John Gerring et al., "An Institutional Theory of Direct and Indirect Rule," *World Politics*, vol. 63, n. 3, 2011, 377-433, [https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/dziblatt/files/gerring\\_ziblatt.pdf](https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/dziblatt/files/gerring_ziblatt.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> Guy Martin, "Continuity and Change in Franco-African Relations." *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 33(1) 1995, 1-20, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X0002082>

6; Peter J. Schraeder, "France and the Great Game in Africa," *Current History*, vol. 96, no. 610 (1997), 206-211.

<sup>24</sup> Assemblée nationale, "Constitution de la République française," accessed April 2, 2019, [http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/connaissance/constitution.asp#titre\\_2](http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/connaissance/constitution.asp#titre_2).



and abroad.<sup>25</sup> The analysis of the paper allows us to understand the substance of contemporary French presence in Africa and the correlation of mutual African-French relations.

Côte d'Ivoire is amongst the most prominent economic and political actors on the African continent that, at the same time, represents one of the crucial French interests in Africa in modern history, as described in the following chapters. We consider the critical situation in the Côte d'Ivoire's internal political scene in 2002, when the civil war culminated, as a current aspect of examining the relationship between Côte d'Ivoire and France. The persistent unrest during the 2010 presidential elections has contributed to destabilizing the country's political situation and has largely determined its current political and economic position in the region.<sup>26</sup> The impact of the colonial heritage stimulated French interventions in this area, and made a significant contribution to the professional public's debate on the legitimacy of French interventions and accusations of possible French neo-colonialism in Africa.

One of the main disputes amongst authors dealing with the colonial powers is whether direct or indirect colonial rule were in the end more harmful for indigenous people. Huxley expressed his view that direct colonial rule had smashed African tradition, producing a remnant "tissue culture of isolated human cells, cultivated in a rich but unhealthy broth that is a by-product of Western capitalism."<sup>27</sup> Hence, indirect rule experienced mainly by British colonial power aimed to counteract this disintegration by strengthening the existing native social organism. Collier later pointed out that the "generations of multitudinous disaster for Indians were generations of direct rule by the United States; while the radical, methodical shift in the Indian New Deal – a shift to indirect administration, changed Indian disaster to Indian victory."<sup>28</sup> Lugard insisted that colonial powers had a double responsibility. Not only should they protect native populations and promote their development, they should also make available the resources of the colony to the entire world.<sup>29</sup> Haag

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<sup>25</sup> This constitutional authority is sometimes also referred to as a reserved domain from the French original phrase «domaine réservé» - in the free translation the sovereign competence of the president which arouses contradictory views on its use amongst the professionals. It is problematic at the time of cohabitation, when the president's competence in this context is greatly complicated, as the president and the government come from a different political spectrum. In Katja S. Ziegler, "Domaine Réservé," accessed May 15, 2019, <http://opil.ouplaw.com/view/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e1398>.

<sup>26</sup> Fabienne Hara and Comfort Ero, "Ivory Coast on the brink," *The Guardian*, accessed April 9, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/observer/worldview/story/0.11581.859795.00.html>.

<sup>27</sup> Julian Huxley, *Africa View* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1931), 130.

<sup>28</sup> John Collier, *From Every Zenith: A Memoir* (Denver: Sage Books, 1963), 345.

<sup>29</sup> Laurence M. Hauptman, *Africa View: John Collier, The British Colonial Service and American Indian Policy, 1933-1945* (Oxford: Taylor & Francis, Ltd., 1986), 363.

underlines that since colonial times, both France and Britain endeavoured to increase their area of influence through the establishment of monetary zones, trade and defence agreements, and institutions like La Francophonie and the Commonwealth. Especially France used to nourish a deep animosity towards Britain, fearing that small francophone countries would turn to Britain. In the past Cameroon has been a good example for the French suspicion towards Britain. However, over the past decades this competition has decreased significantly, especially regarding political influence.<sup>30</sup>

During the decades since the declaration of independence of African countries, the development of French foreign policy towards Africa has undergone considerable changes. As we already mentioned, Sub-Saharan Africa has long been regarded as the French “sovereign sphere of influence”. De Gaulle’s policy particularly emphasized the efforts to build a strong Europe based on French-German cooperation, and to maintain a strong French status on the international political scene. After the decolonization process in Africa in the 1960s, France continued to keep military bases in some countries, thereby strengthening its strong power position equally in the sub-Saharan region and giving immediate access to strategic raw materials, especially oil and uranium.

De Gaulle’s strategy of “grandeur”<sup>31</sup> postulates the concept of power, whose main attribute was the active, interventionist state approach linked to territorial control and the demonstration of military forces.<sup>32</sup> The roots of this concept are based on the historical determinant of French foreign policy until the colonial rule of France on the African continent, which persisted also in the post-colonial era in the Black Africa region. The interventionist approach formed the basis of a “Gaullist consensus” on African policy and was a central element of French elite interests across the political spectrum.

Despite expectations, the fall of the Berlin Wall has not significantly affected the situation in Africa. Although the efforts of African countries to progressively democratize were stronger and sought a significant shift away from authoritarian regimes, France did not explicitly require African countries to adopt democratic values.<sup>33</sup> Following the collapse of the bipolar world during

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<sup>30</sup> Haag, “Mechanisms of Neo-colonialism.”

<sup>31</sup> In the context of the Cold War, de Gaulle initiated a policy of grandiosity – from the French «grandeur». He declared that France, as a central world power, could not rely on other countries, e.g. the United States of America, in issues such as national security and prosperity. De Gaulle has therefore enforced a policy of ‘national independence’ and launched a nuclear program called the «Force de frappe», making France one of the biggest nuclear power in the world. In Serge Bernstein, *The Republic of de Gaulle 1958-1969* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 167.

<sup>32</sup> Tony Chafer, “Chirac and ‘la Françafrique’: No Longer a Family Affair,” *Modern & Contemporary France*, 13:1 (2005), 7-23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0963948052000341196>.

<sup>33</sup> The only exception from Africa is Benin, where the democratization process has been successfully completed. In Rachel M. Gisselquist, “Democratic Transition and

President François Mitterrand's term, French military interventions in Africa continued. The most serious and controversial case of French involvement is the situation in Rwanda between 1990-1994. During this period, the French military forces were actively involved in training the Rwandan army.<sup>34</sup> According to Moore, subsequent civil war and genocide in the region have contributed to France's negative image on the international scene.<sup>35</sup> From a global perspective, the controversially-perceived Rwandan genocide was for the France the end of the Cold War in Africa. For this reason, France has often been referred to as «gendarme de l'Afrique»,<sup>36</sup> a power with continued influence and military intervention in the region.<sup>37</sup> This phenomenon supports our assumptions about French historical neo-colonial ties which, according to our model, lie in the persistent military presence while securitizing the French hegemony over the francophone Africa.

### Changing Foreign Policy Priorities of the French Presidents Towards Africa

As Vazanova highlights, at the time of creation of the new era of international relations, President Chirac had to draw up a new French approach in the context of international political developments after the end of the Cold War. He decided to resume nuclear tests in the Pacific, actively involved France in NATO structures, and one of the most striking elements of the Chirac

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Democratic Survival in Benin,” *Democratization*, 15:4 (2008), 789-814, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510340802191078>.

<sup>34</sup> France has provided diplomatic and military support to the genocidal regime of Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana, thereby making France's reputation in this regard considerably worse and the situation is still not fully resolved. The French intervention in Rwanda in 1994 is known as Operation Turquoise. In Daniela Krosiak, *The Role of France in the Rwandan Genocide* (London: C Hurst & Co., 2007), 41.

<sup>35</sup> Jina Moore, “Rwanda Accuses France of Complicity in 1994 Genocide,” *The New York Times*, accessed May 15, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/13/world/africa/rwanda-france-genocide.html>.

<sup>36</sup> Adrien Hart, “La France, gendarme de l'Afrique?,” accessed May 4, 2019, <http://www.slateafrique.com/2319/france-gendarme-de-l-afrique>.

<sup>37</sup> A significant piece of the post-colonial jigsaw was France's substantial military presence. This, in addition to abroad license to intervene through defence agreements with nearly half of Africa's states, all helped France become known as the gendarme of Africa. With permanent military bases originally found in Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Chad, Djibouti, Gabon, Cameroon and the Central African Republic, responsibility to “defend” Africa from Communism during the Cold War dovetailed with French interests in maintaining regional hegemony. In I. J. Benneyworth, “The Ongoing Relationship Between France and its Former African Colonies,” accessed April 23, 2020, <https://www.e-ir.info/pdf/9402>.

administration was the extensive reform of the French army.<sup>38</sup> During his official visits to African countries in September 1997, Chirac advocated established military reforms and their impact on the decline of French troops in the area. However, it certainly did not want to disrupt the concept of above-standard relations with Africa and declared the preservation of the French military presence despite slight reform changes in military affairs. In his publication,<sup>39</sup> Francis McNamara emphasizes that Chirac and his predecessor, Mitterrand, have also avoided open discussions on African affairs.

However, the real turnaround in the African policy of France came only after Nicolas Sarkozy's arrival in the presidential office in May 2007.<sup>40</sup> Attempts to stabilize Franco-African relations were perceived positively.<sup>41</sup> Particularly, Sarkozy's reform efforts have been reflected in the negotiation of historic defence and military agreements to reduce the number of military forces in African countries. France has committed in its defence strategy to take responsibility for African countries in case of an external threat to stability in that area. We analyse this aspect on the example of the French approach at the time of the Côte d'Ivoire civil war, which is critically perceived as an attempt to maintain neo-colonial ties with the former African colony.

President Sarkozy's statement at the beginning of his term of office represented a fundamental change in France's African policy. He said he welcomed the interest of other powers, such as the United States and China to engage in the African continent.<sup>42</sup> This claim negated the policy of France's historic interest in maintaining a sovereign sphere of influence in the African region. Thus, in relation to Africa, Sarkozy's policy is very contradictory. On the one hand, he tried to solve the issue of French activity on the African continent, but at the same time he maintained politically opaque relations with some African dictators, who are still associated with his person nowadays.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Pavlina Vazanova, "Prezidentské volby ve Francii 2012 – srovnání zahraničních politik N. Sarkozyho a F. Hollande," accessed May 20, 2019, <http://www.globalpolitics.cz/clanky/prezidentske-volby-ve-francii-2012-srovnani-zahranicnich-politik-n-sarkozyho-a-f-hollande>.

<sup>39</sup> Francis T. McNamara, *France in Black Africa* (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 1989), 207.

<sup>40</sup> Assane Thiam, "La politique africaine de Nicolas Sarkozy: rupture ou continuité?," *Politique étrangère*, 2008/4 (Winter), 873-884, <https://doi.org/10.3917/pe.084.0873>.

<sup>41</sup> Richard Moncrieff, "French Relations with Sub-Saharan Africa Under President Sarkozy," SAIIA Occasional Paper no. 107, January 2012, accessed May 20, 2019, <http://www.saiia.org.za/occasional-papers/french-relations-with-sub-saharan-africa-under-president-sarkozy>.

<sup>42</sup> Henri Astier, "Sarkozy's Africa policy shift," *BBC News*, accessed April 19, 2019, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7014776.stm>.

<sup>43</sup> Reuters reported on the provable connection of former French President Sarkozy with the Libyan dictator Gaddafi. The French police are investigating Sarkozy about the suspicion of illegal financing of his 2007 election campaign by the Libyan regime. In Brian Love and Emmanuel Jarry, "Former French president Sarkozy held over Gaddafi cash inquiry,"

At the turn of the millennium, humanitarian aid and the international fight against terrorism have become an essential element of French foreign policy towards Africa. President Hollande had limited possibilities, as the situation in the Sahel and Mali, which had been occupied by Islamic militant groups, dramatically oscillated. It was almost impossible to avoid French interventions in this area. The main effort of French diplomacy was to transfer more responsibility for peacekeeping to the international community through different structures (UN, EU, African organizations) to diversify as far as possible the risks posed by military engagement in Africa. Despite Hollande's statements that France will no longer be actively involved in military interventions, the troops were sent to Mali and the Central African Republic.<sup>44</sup> As *the White Paper of the French Defence Strategy* from 2013<sup>45</sup> states, Africa was still of significant importance to France. Holland's vision, however, prefigured an effort to release mutual Franco-African relations from any signs of French neo-colonial influence on the African continent and create a new partnership based on cooperation with Africa.

The current foreign policy towards Africa reflects President Macron's undeniable efforts to address the issue of the African continent through a more comprehensive approach – where the spotlight of the mutual cooperation, instead of military presence, is mainly based on education, political and economic development of African countries. Pilling points out that Macron had already, as the first French leader born after African independence, during the 2017 election campaign, deemed France's activities in Algeria a "crime against humanity".<sup>46</sup> On a visit to African countries, Macron has declared on several occasions that France will not interfere with the internal affairs of African countries, which was a sign for a real change in French foreign policy towards Africa.<sup>47</sup>

French interventionism in Africa reached its peak in the 1980s, and therefore, we are currently experiencing a significant decline in French intervention in the world. This fact is also influenced by the current policy of all French presidents, whose aim was to reduce budget spending in this area. However, in 2013, during the François Hollande term, a military operation took place in Mali, which was preceded by interventions in Libya during the mandate of Nicolas Sarkozy as President. In the current situation, Macron seeks to ensure

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Reuters, accessed April 24, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-sarkozy-libya/former-french-president-sarkozy-held-over-gaddafi-cash-inquiry-idUSKBN1GW0RH>.

<sup>44</sup> Tony Chafer, "Hollande and Africa Policy," *Modern & Contemporary France*, 22:4, 513-531, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09639489.2014.957966>.

<sup>45</sup> Ministère des Armées, "Le Livre blanc sur la défense et la sécurité nationale 2013," accessed July 20, 2019, <http://fr.calameo.com/read/000331627d6f04ea4fe0e>.

<sup>46</sup> David Pilling, "A revolution in Africa's relations with France is afoot," *Financial Times*, accessed May 7, 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/8894ad6e-2650-11ea-9a4f-963f0ec7e134>.

<sup>47</sup> Rina Bassist, "Macron ruptures with Hollande's Africa policy; focuses on collective diplomacy," accessed April 20, 2019, <https://dayan.org/content/macron-ruptures-hollandes-africa-policy-focuses-collective-diplomacy>.

greater involvement of African governments in the fight against terrorist groups in the Sahel. There are more than 3,000 French soldiers in this area, as expressed by the current Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs, Jean-Yves Le Drian, in an interview.<sup>48</sup>

### A Case Study of the French Approach Towards Africa in Côte d'Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire has been always seen as an exemplary country from economic as well as security standpoints.<sup>49</sup> As Lawrence Alschuler points out, Ivorian exceptional growth implies the presence of exceptional circumstances, that is, conditions especially present in Côte d'Ivoire but conspicuously absent elsewhere in francophone West Africa. He underlines two major exceptional conditions of the Ivorian miracle – (1) the Ivorian uniqueness as a French colony and (2) the origins of the planter bourgeoisie.<sup>50</sup>

Among the French colonies of West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire was unique in number of ways. Initially, it was unique in being a neglected colony.<sup>51</sup> According to Frank's assumption, the French metropolis appears to have had especially weak exploitative ties with the colonial Côte d'Ivoire in comparison with neighbouring countries.<sup>52</sup> The turning point in the mutual dependence was the introduction of cash crops<sup>53</sup> after the World War II, which was to have a profound influence on Ivorian socio-political structure.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Gary K. Busch, "The U.S. and the wars in the Sahel," accessed March 27, 2019, <https://www.pambazuka.org/human-security/us-and-wars-sahel>.

<sup>49</sup> Côte d'Ivoire was considered as a centre piece of French interest in Africa, together with Cameroon, Senegal, and Gabon, as they are a vital source of raw materials, as well as an important market for manufactured goods and an outlet for capital investment. In Martin, "The historical, economic and political."

<sup>50</sup> Lawrence R. Alschuler, *Multinationals and Maldevelopment: Alternative Development Strategies in Argentina, the Ivory Coast and Korea* (London: MacMillan Press LTD, 1998), 65.

<sup>51</sup> Colonial rule came late, in 1893, in comparison with neighbouring colonies. In Alschuler, *Multinationals and Maldevelopment*, 66.

<sup>52</sup> Andre G. Frank, *The Development of Underdevelopment* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 10.

<sup>53</sup> The rapid expansion of cash crop exports in the 1950s set class differentiation. At the Ivorian core of the class structure lie the planter bourgeoisie, large number of medium-size plantation owners and a large, rural proletariat. In Alschuler, *Multinationals and Maldevelopment*, 67.

<sup>54</sup> Bonnie Campbell, Social Change and Class Formation in a French West African State, *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue canadienne des études africaines*, 8:2, 285-306 (1974), 294, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00083968.1974.10804437>.

We emphasize a third essential condition, as (3) Côte d'Ivoire's top officials were prominent allies of a long-standing French colonizer in the Black African region, after all, President Félix Houphouët-Boigny himself was a minister in the French capital.<sup>55</sup> However, by his death, the situation in the country has been substantially transformed and revolutionary leaders have been at the forefront of their efforts to enforce the country's political scene. The ensuing riots and the outbreak of civil war have prompted French troops to stabilize the escalating situation. By analysing the case study from Côte d'Ivoire with a focus on the French military presence in the country, we want to highlight the continuing influence of France in the sub-Saharan region, which is the main aspect of this analysis.

The consequences of the Rwandan genocide have meant for the international community the need to review the approach to addressing armed crises on the African continent. Direct military intervention was no guarantee of reconciliation and stability, on the contrary, there was often a deepening of the unrest, which further destabilized the already bad economic and political situation of African countries. It was therefore necessary for French diplomacy to put in place adequate mechanisms that would not undermine France's good relations with the francophone African states given the historical context, and which would also reflect the necessary change of African policy in connection with the events in Rwanda. President Chirac, however, externally rejected any interference with the internal affairs of his African allies. In view of his previous experience with Rwandan genocide, he was aware of the need to review the steps to support African regimes, as such steps have not always proved to be correct.

In the past, Côte d'Ivoire has been regarded as an exemplary African country, but entering the new millennium it has been facing an internal political crisis for almost two decades. Increasing riots grew into a civil war in 2002, and the country was split north and south by the government.<sup>56</sup> At that time, relations between Paris and the Ivory President Gbagbo were tense. Nevertheless, as we describe more deeply in further sections, France decided to support Gbagbo who *de facto* benefited from this situation.

At the time of the riots in Côte d'Ivoire, President Gbagbo decided to apply one of the contracts he had concluded with France in the post-colonial period. Thus, in an initially opaque situation, France refused to intervene militarily in Côte d'Ivoire. At the same time, French diplomacy was aware of the threat of an outbreak of civil war destabilizing one of the most prosperous countries in West Africa. This situation also had a huge impact on the whole

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<sup>55</sup> In the Constitution adopted in 1946, Houphouët-Boigny initiated a law abolishing all forms of forced labour in the territories of «d'outre-mer». In Thomas Piketty, *Capital et Idéologie* (Paris: Seuil, 2019), 401.

<sup>56</sup> Peter Custers, "Globalisation and War in Ivory Coast," *Economic & Political Weekly*, vol. 41, Issue No. 19 (2006), accessed March 20, 2019, <http://www.epw.in/journal/2006/19/commentary/globalisation-and-war-ivory-coast.html>.

region, which would ultimately be reflected in the weakening of the French influence in the region. The reasons for the eligibility of French intervention were also declared by the existence of a Côte d'Ivoire military base and by the fact that the country was an exemplary former French colony. It launched Operation Licorne,<sup>57</sup> which was meant to stabilize the country's situation and separate the rebels and reigns. In our opinion, if the intervention of the French troops did not take place, the uprising would probably have stopped President Gbagbo, as the French interventions of Gbagbo's regime indirectly supported it.

### Background of the Crisis in Côte d'Ivoire

The escalation of tensions in the Côte d'Ivoire's internal political scene is interpreted by many experts as a cultural-religious conflict<sup>58</sup> between Muslims and Christians, including several ethnic groups from the savannah and groups of forest zones.<sup>59</sup> This simplistic approach is supported in particular by politicians and media representatives, who, on the basis of these contexts, understand ethnicity as an innate, objectively given and unchanging essence of human identity and could face a confrontation in a clash with a different cultural-ideological entity.<sup>60</sup> However, taking into consideration a more comprehensive approach, we can say that it can be perceived as an ideologically conditioned intrastate destabilization process, which is an important tool, especially in the struggle to gain influence. Therefore, we consider the Côte d'Ivoire crisis to be a more complex and multilevel conflict in which ethnicity plays an important role but is closely linked to the issue of economic crisis, migration policy, political discrimination and, above all, citizenship issues. The complexity of these factors contributes to the ambiguous and often abused interpretation of the *Ivoirité concept*.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Operation Licorne represented a peaceful operation of the French armed forces. Its main mission was to support the UN peacekeeping mission and ensure the security of the population. The military operation was launched on September 22, 2002 at the beginning of the Côte d'Ivoire civil war. In the initial phase, it comprised 1,200 soldiers, and by the end of 2002 the number had increased to 2,500. In Ministère de la Défense, "Dossier de l'opération Licorne aux forces françaises en Côte d'Ivoire," accessed July 14, 2019, <http://fr.calameo.com/read/004151978987729f45fdd>.

<sup>58</sup> Norimitsu Onishi, "2 Religions Clashing in Ivory Coast," *The New York Times*, accessed July 15, 2019, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/11/06/world/2-religions-clashing-in-ivory-coast.html>.

<sup>59</sup> Marcus Banks, *Ethnicity: anthropological constructions* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 18.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Maja Bovcon, "France's Conflict Resolution Strategy in Côte d'Ivoire and its Ethical Implications," accessed March 12, 2019, <http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v11/v11i1a1.pdf>.



After Félix Houphouët-Boigny<sup>62</sup> – President of Côte d’Ivoire’s for nearly four decades, died in 1993, there was a problem with the appointment of a new president. Houphouët-Boigny stated in the Constitution that, in the case of his death, the President of the National Assembly, Henri Konan Bédié, will hold the President’s office until the end of the parliamentary term.<sup>63</sup> However, Bédié was not able to adapt to changing conditions on the country’s internal political scene, nor to democratize society, and was unable to create a suitable political environment for the existence of multiple political parties.<sup>64</sup> Thereby, the efforts of several of Bédié’s competitors to attack his authority, especially the leader of the opposition party, *Front Populaire Ivoirien* (FPI) Laurent Gbagbo and reformist Alassane Ouattara from the ruling party *Parti démocratique de Côte d’Ivoire* (PDCI), had these ambitions.

In 1999, a military coup took place, and General Gueï took power in the country despite not being part of the Baoulé ethnic group.<sup>65</sup> The opposition led by Gbagbo refused to recognize the results and under considerable international pressure, Gueï resigned and left the post of President to Gbagbo. In this context, we can reflect the doctrine of *ni-ni* of French Prime Minister Jospin about not interfering with African internal affairs.<sup>66</sup> Despite France’s acceptance of Gueï’s victory in the presidential election, it has not taken any action against the new president Laurent Gbagbo. Part of the population’s dissatisfaction with President Gbagbo’s policy affected the country’s political situation. The internal

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<sup>62</sup> Félix Houphouët-Boigny made a significant contribution to the Côte d’Ivoire’s independence declaration on August 7, 1960. During the performance of Côte d’Ivoire President (1960-1993), he maintained close political ties with France and South Africa, isolating the country from the riots of military uprisings and Marxist influence in the region. Côte d’Ivoire has been able to develop its economy, attract foreign investment and become the world’s largest cocoa producer, thanks to its internal stability. In Global Security, “Military - Ivory Coast Conflict,” accessed November 15, 2019, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/ivory-coast.htm>.

<sup>63</sup> Tom Lansford, *Political Handbook of the World 2014* (Los Angeles: CQ Press, 2014), 338.

<sup>64</sup> Bédié created a highly controversial ideological concept of *Ivoirité* to defend the presidential seat. The concept defined the status of “true citizens” of Côte d’Ivoire and “natural” power candidates from the Akan ethnicity, more precisely Baoulé, from which former President Houphouët-Boigny, Bédié and most of the followers PDCI ruling party were. In terms of demography, there is large number of ethnic groups in Côte d’Ivoire. The largest share is held by the Akan ethnic group, which accounts for up to 42% of the country’s population. Akanians represent the original ethnic group, but not racially homogeneous ethnicity. In World Population Review, “Ivory Coast Population,” accessed August 10, 2019, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/ivory-coast-population/>.

<sup>65</sup> Global Security, “Military - Ivory Coast Conflict.”

<sup>66</sup> Marco Wyss, “The Gendarme Stays in Africa: France’s Military Role in Côte d’Ivoire,” *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review*, vol. 3, no. 1 (Spring 2013), 81-111, doi:10.2979/africonfpeacevi.3.1.81.

conflict of the country was overtaken by a series of attacks in Abidjan,<sup>67</sup> Bouaké and Korhogo on September 19, 2002, when armed groups detached from the army under General Gueï's pursuit of a military coup.<sup>68</sup> They demanded the resignation of then President Gbagbo, securing free and fair elections, and abolishing the discriminatory concept of Ivoirité. This has not been left unnoticed by the international community, which has made every effort to contribute to the end of the Côte d'Ivoire conflict.<sup>69</sup>

After independence in 1960, Ivorian incomers made no bigger efforts to achieve a higher standard of living. This was reflected in the overall performance of the economy, as Côte d'Ivoire remained agriculturally oriented and thus became the largest cocoa producer with a 40% share of the world production of this commodity.<sup>70</sup> This trend was slightly aggravated by the impact of the civil war of 2002 and the division of the country, as can be seen in the chart (*Chart 1*) showing Côte d'Ivoire's cocoa production.

The then President Houphouët-Boigny tried to ease the interethnic tensions by allowing every ethnic group to be part of the political process. Nevertheless, he privileged representatives of Baoulé, thereby neglecting the northern region of the country.<sup>71</sup> The pressures on social reforms have increased and disputes over the issue of citizenship and national affairs have escalated. His most striking opponents were Alassane Ouattara, who had support from the northern regions and economic immigrants and their descendants who refused to continue contributing to the country's economic prosperity as second-class citizens.<sup>72</sup>

Remarkable is the fact that despite the civil war in the country, there were functioning institutions and the middle class of the population also increased.

<sup>67</sup> Abidjan was the capital of Côte d'Ivoire until 1983. However, in the same year, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the first Côte d'Ivoire president, moved the country's capital to his native village of Yamoussoukro. Nevertheless, Abidjan continued to be the economic and cultural centre of Côte d'Ivoire. In Tim Butcher, "Desolation and decay in capital showpiece," *The Telegraph*, accessed May 10, 2019, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/cotedivoire/1408736/Desolation-and-decay-in-capitalshowpiece.html>.

<sup>68</sup> Ernest Harsch, "Fragile peace in Côte d'Ivoire," accessed July 15, 2019, <http://www.un.org/en/africarenewal/vol17no2/172cote.htm>.

<sup>69</sup> Cyril K. Daddieh, *Historical Dictionary of Cote d'Ivoire (The Ivory Coast)* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 143.

<sup>70</sup> Marius Wessel and Foluke Quist-Wessel, "Cocoa production in West Africa: a review and analysis of recent developments," *NJAS-Wageningen Journal of Life Sciences*, 74-75 (2015), p. 2. DOI: 10.1016/j.njas.2015.09.001.

<sup>71</sup> Arnim Langer, "Horizontal Inequalities and Violent Conflict: Côte d'Ivoire Country Paper," Human Development Report Office, Occasional Paper, 2005, accessed March 20, 2019, [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2005\\_langer\\_arnim\\_32.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2005_langer_arnim_32.pdf).

<sup>72</sup> Adam Nossiter, "Opposition Forces in Ivory Coast Take Towns on 2 Fronts," *The New York Times*, accessed April 12, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/30/world/africa/30ivory.html>.

This fact is supported by data from the World Bank database, which declares a constant 2% growth in the middle class<sup>73</sup> in Côte d'Ivoire during the Civil War period. We must not forget the strategic economic and geopolitical importance of Côte d'Ivoire in the region as it is the main economic driving force of Francophone West Africa. As a result, the country absorbed significant immigration flows predominantly from underdeveloped countries placed in the inland Africa. Thus, the decline in Côte d'Ivoire's economy would have a serious impact on the entire West African region.

### French Interventions – Causes and Consequences

The continuing French influence in Black Africa is declared by its intervention as a former colonial hegemonic leader in the region. Only a few days after the failed military coup, France intervened almost immediately in the conflict.<sup>74</sup> Their military intervention was justified by the government as the obligation to protect French citizens abroad if their lives are at risk and the host country is unwilling or capable to ensure their safety.<sup>75</sup> Likewise, President Gbagbo himself asked for the help of the French army, referring to the defence agreements that both countries had linked since independence. France was authorized to intervene in the case of an *external threat*<sup>76</sup> of disruption to Côte d'Ivoire's sovereignty. France interpreted this tense situation as "an internal conflict and provided an assistance in the protection and evacuation of French citizens as well as of other nationals trying to avoid a civil war."<sup>77</sup> Therefore, it preferred to maintain a peaceful settlement of the dispute instead of active support the troops in the dispute, with which Gbagbo, who asked the French for active military assistance, was certainly not satisfied.<sup>78</sup> However, the French military presence in the country was a significant obstacle to the rebels fighting Gbagbo's regime, as they failed to occupy the strategic city of Abidjan

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<sup>73</sup> World Bank, "Low & middle income," accessed April 20, 2019, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?end=2016&locations=XO-CI&start=1960&view=chart>.

<sup>74</sup> Wyss, "The Gendarme Stays."

<sup>75</sup> Ministère de la Défense, "Dossier de présentation de l'opération Licorne aux forces françaises en Côte d'Ivoire," accessed July 14, 2019, <http://fr.calameo.com/read/004151978987729f45fdd>.

<sup>76</sup> In October 2002, claiming that there was foreign involvement in the insurgency (Burkina Faso, Liberia, and Libya), the Ivorian president invoked the defence accords. Despite Gbagbo's argumentation, France refused to intervene on the side of the Ivorian government, opting instead for peacekeeping. In Wyss, "The Gendarme Stays."

<sup>77</sup> Wyss, "The Gendarme Stays."

<sup>78</sup> Arthur Boutellis, "The Security Sector in Côte d'Ivoire: A Source of Conflict and a Key to Peace," International Peace Institute, accessed March 17, 2019, [https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/ipi\\_epub\\_cote\\_d\\_ivoire.pdf](https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/ipi_epub_cote_d_ivoire.pdf).

controlled by the French troops. This was one of the decisive factors that prevented Gbagbo's regime from overthrowing in Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>79</sup>

The reluctance to engage actively in the Côte d'Ivoire conflict must be seen in the wider historical context of criticism of French support for dictatorial regimes or the intervention of French troops during the Rwanda genocide in 1994. Equally, France's greater involvement in NATO structures and European integration processes and the creation of economic and monetary union contributed to this, which, however, required lower public spending and greater transparency. These aspects have severely limited France to maintaining equally superior relations with African countries.

According to Pierre Haski, the cause of France's neutral attitude towards the coup can also be seen in view of the opportunistic French policy towards Côte d'Ivoire. France maintained strong ties with Côte d'Ivoire's political elites, and thus managed to ensure for itself a strong influence in the country, even with any change of leadership. President Gbagbo had many allies among the members of the French Socialist Party, who later condemned the illegality of the presidential election in 2000. His main opponent, Alassane Ouattara, was close to neoliberal French politicians, including Nicolas Sarkozy.<sup>80</sup> The main objective of the French intervention was to exert pressure on Côte d'Ivoire's political leaders to jointly discuss the disputed issue of Ivoirité, which caused disruption within the country. In fact, France was aware that a stable situation in Côte d'Ivoire could not be restored by military intervention, so it clearly favoured a political solution to the Ivory crisis.<sup>81</sup> However, a critical analysis of the conflict resolution strategy reveals a discrepancy in France's allegedly neutral position.<sup>82</sup> Following the launch of Operation Licorne, France provided logistical support to Côte d'Ivoire and brokered the so-called Côte d'Ivoire's confidence zone. The demarcation of the confidence zone did not reflect the univocal ethnic and cultural stratification of the population, as most people known as "foreigners" now live in the southwest of the country.

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<sup>79</sup> At the time of the outbreak of the conflict, the north of the country was under the administration of rebel groups, while the south was controlled by the Côte d'Ivoire Armed Forces (FANCI), which were loyal to President Gbagbo. Several groups operated in the area against Gbagbo's regime. Their union created new Côte d'Ivoire political force – Forces Nouvelles de Côte d'Ivoire (FNCI), whose main representative was Alassane Ouattara. Alassane Ouattara was no new person in Côte d'Ivoire's political environment. He was the last prime minister of the president Félix Houphouët-Boigny's administrative in the period 1990-1993. However, in 2000, he could not stand as president because of the controversial law surrounding the Ivoirité concept, which classified him as a non-native of Côte d'Ivoire. In Peace Insight, "Ivory Coast: Conflict profile," accessed March 5, 2019, <https://www.peaceinsight.org/conflicts/ivory-coast/>.

<sup>80</sup> Pierre Haski, "Ivory Coast's real battle," *The Guardian*, accessed April 10, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/jan/04/ivory-coast-real-battle>.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Bovcon, "France's Conflict Resolution."

An important milestone in the Ivory conflict was the signing of the Linas-Marcoussis agreements<sup>83</sup> on January 24, 2003, with the participation of French President Jacques Chirac and all parties involved in the Côte d'Ivoire conflict, where they agreed to maintain the integrity of Côte d'Ivoire and create a transitional National Reconciliation Government.<sup>84</sup> The most important thing was to remove the disputed Article 35 of the Constitution,<sup>85</sup> under which Alassane Ouattara could not be elected in the presidential election, as under this article the parents of the presidential candidate had to be born in Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>86</sup>

However, at the same time, Gbagbo came up with the initiative of 'own' solutions for Côte d'Ivoire. All the changes were made on the basis of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement signed on March 4, 2007,<sup>87</sup> which in addition to completing the DDR program, also caused the suppression of the confidence zone and the gradual replacement of UNOCI and Licorne's impartial forces by mixed forces consisting of rebellious Côte d'Ivoire rebel fighters and soldiers. By doing so, France's position in Côte d'Ivoire had considerably weakened since the 2002 military intervention.<sup>88</sup> Despite the efforts, solving the internal political conflict in Côte d'Ivoire still did not have real contours and the presidential elections at the end of 2010 did not contribute to the improvement of the situation.

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<sup>83</sup> Uppsala Conflict Data Program, "Ouagadougou Agreement," accessed August 15, 2019, <http://www.ucdp.uu.se/downloads/fullpeace/IVO%2020070304.pdf>.

<sup>84</sup> The main task of this interim government was to ensure free and fair elections after the rebel groups were disarmed, the total demobilization and re-integration of Côte d'Ivoire – a program also known as DDR. In Stephanie Hanson, "Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) in Africa," Council on Foreign Relations, accessed May 4, 2019, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/disarmament-demobilization-and-reintegration-ddr-africa>.

<sup>85</sup> In Article 35 The Côte d'Ivoire Constitution of 2000 is stated that "a candidate for a post of President must be from Côte d'Ivoire, whose father and mother are also from Côte d'Ivoire. He must never give up his Ivory nationality and never claim to have any other nationality." In: Parliament, "Constitution de Côte d'Ivoire 2000," accessed May 18, 2019, <http://www.parliament.am/library/sahmanadrutyunner/kotdviuar.pdf>.

<sup>86</sup> On February 27, 2004, a full UN peacekeeping operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) was set up under pressure from the French side, which called for a more concrete international intervention from the UN. This mission co-operated in Côte d'Ivoire with the French operation Licorne. Despite the efforts of the international community, tensions in Côte d'Ivoire escalated. The UN Security Council (UNSC) postponed the presidential elections to be held in the country at the end of 2006, extended UNOCI's mandate and the French mission of Licorne and, on a proposal from France, gave the Prime Minister of the interim government more authority. In United Nations, "UNOCI United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire," accessed April 15, 2019, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/mission/past/unoci.shtml>.

<sup>87</sup> United Nations Security Council, "Ouagadougou Political Agreement," accessed May 20, 2019, <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Cote%20d%27Ivoire%20S2007144.pdf>.

<sup>88</sup> Wyss, "The Gendarme Stays in Africa," 81-111.

The strong political determinant of the example of Côte d'Ivoire was that Houphouët-Boigny maintained strong relations with France as the head of the country. These links were strengthened after independence by the growing number of French technical assistants in all major sectors of the economy. The constant presence of French military forces in Côte d'Ivoire has practically decimated home military units that have not been able to adequately defend their own territory.

Despite the complicated French-Ivory relationship analysis, France remains the most important trade partner of Côte d'Ivoire. Many French expatriates have returned to Côte d'Ivoire and several French firms have been restored, such as *Bouygues* in the energy sector and *France Télécom* in telecommunications. The involvement of the UN and ECOWAS as well as the EU and the African Union in the conflict resolution strategy has not weakened French influence in Côte d'Ivoire. Taking into consideration the reduced military budget of France, the multilateral peacekeeping operation helped France reduce the cost of military intervention in favour of enforcement of its national interests.

On the following chart (*Chart 2*) we can see how the number of French military units developed under Operation Licorne. The significantly higher frequency of the French military presence in 2004 and 2010-2011 is due to the circumstances in the Côte d'Ivoire's internal political scene, when the most massive escalation of the crisis, which required French intervention to stabilize the conflict, occurred. Operation Licorne was officially closed on January 21, 2015,<sup>89</sup> which supports our claims regarding improving the situation in Côte d'Ivoire as well as the development of France's current foreign policy, which is trying to leave peacekeeping to the Ivory military.

However, like Richard Moncrieff in his study,<sup>90</sup> we disagree with most of the interpretations that indicate that French interventionism in Côte d'Ivoire was inadequate.<sup>91</sup> According to such interpretations, the French attitude to the Côte d'Ivoire conflict reflects France's "confused" African policy, whose execution has been an obstacle to rivalry between the various interest groups on the French political scene. It is true that France's response to the Côte d'Ivoire crisis has not been so active, but we also observe the extreme ambiguity of Laurent Gbagbo's policy towards France caused by the constant review of his position and the adaptation of his real political intentions.

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<sup>89</sup> Ministère de la Défense, "Dossier de présentation de l'opération Licorne."

<sup>90</sup> Richard Moncrieff, "French Relations with Sub-Saharan Africa Under President Sarkozy," SAIIA Occasional Paper no. 107, January 2012, accessed May 20, 2019, <http://www.saiia.org.za/occasional-papers/french-relations-with-sub-saharan-africa-under-president-sarkozy>.

<sup>91</sup> Bovcon, "France's Conflict Resolution."

Ruth Marshall also claims that French involvement in the conflict is disadvantaged by its significant former colonial supremacy, which ultimately strengthened the current ultranationalist sentiments of some Côte d'Ivoire residents, including "young patriots".<sup>92</sup> It was the ambiguity of the French relationship with his former colony that offered Gbagbo an opportunity to challenge every decision made by France or other entities. He used a strong mobilization discourse on "the fight against French neo-colonialism". However, the fact remains that France is an integral part of Côte d'Ivoire's history.

### Current situation in Côte d'Ivoire

The crisis that paralyzed the country in 2002 was not a unique phenomenon in this geopolitical environment. Côte d'Ivoire found itself on the verge of civil conflict early in 2011, when then President Laurent Gbagbo refused to acknowledge the defeat in the second round of the presidential election.<sup>93</sup> However, the security situation has improved considerably since 2011, and the UN Security Council's 14-year peace mission ended on June 30, 2017 based on *Resolution 2284*.<sup>94</sup> The UNSC in Resolution 2283, also adopted unanimously, immediately withdrew sanctions against Côte d'Ivoire involving an arms embargo, a travel ban on designated persons and the freezing of their property. The UNSC resolution welcomes "the remarkable progress of Côte d'Ivoire to achieve lasting peace and stability as well as economic prosperity."<sup>95</sup> It also appreciates the successful presidential elections of October 2015, in which Ouattara has clearly won after economic growth during his first term of office as a crucial turning point in strengthening long-term peace and stability in the country.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Ruth Marshall, "La France en Côte d'Ivoire: l'interventionnisme à l'épreuve des faits," *Politique africaine*, 2005/2 (n. 98), p. 21-41, <https://doi.org/10.3917/polaf.098.0021>.

<sup>93</sup> Alassane Ouattara was victorious in the second round of the presidential election. Ouattara after all took over the office in May 2011. Gbagbo was detained and is currently facing accusations of participation in the violence before the International Criminal Court, which claimed more than 3,000 lives after the 2010 elections. In Arthur Boutellis, "The Security Sector in Côte d'Ivoire: A Source of Conflict and a Key to Peace," International Peace Institute, accessed March 17, 2019, [https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/ipi\\_epub\\_cote\\_d\\_ivoire.pdf](https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/ipi_epub_cote_d_ivoire.pdf).

<sup>94</sup> At the end of February, there were a total of about 4,650 soldiers and military observers and nearly 1,400 police officers. In United Nations, "UNOCI United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire."

<sup>95</sup> United Nations, "Security Council Authorizes Final Extension for United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, Welcoming Country's 'Remarkable' Progress," accessed July 14, 2019, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sc12342.doc.htm>.

<sup>96</sup> United Nations, "28 April 2016 - Côte d'Ivoire: End of UN mission and lift of UN sanctions in Cote d'Ivoire," accessed July 15, 2019, <https://onu.delegfrance.org/End-of-UN-mission-and-lift-of-UN-sanctions-in-Cote-d-Ivoire>.

This development highlights the progress of the West African country in peace after a long period of instability and political crisis. After independence from the French colonial administration in 1960, Côte d'Ivoire was the world's leading exporter of cocoa with a thriving economy. This has changed over the ten years of the Civil War, as is also seen in *Chart 1*. Nevertheless, after returning to political stability in 2012, the country became one of the fastest growing economies of sub-Saharan Africa. After reaching a GDP growth rate of approximately 9% in three consecutive years, it is obvious that Côte d'Ivoire still exceeds the regional average of sub-Saharan Africa, as confirmed by data from Credendo.<sup>97</sup>

The biggest shift in the region's relations with France since independence is for many experts the transition of the eight West African states<sup>98</sup> from the CFA franc<sup>99</sup> in favour of a new currency *eco*. Alassane Ouattara was a strong supporter of the CFA franc, maintaining its stability and solidity. As Pilling highlights, the currency transition to the *eco* is more political than economic, as CFA franc was perceived as the part of the French continuing hegemony in region. Thanks to this shift, France can possibly rid of its "neo-colonial" tendencies and abandon the controversial nuance of linkage to the *Françafrique* legacy.<sup>100</sup>

## Conclusion

The African continent is full of paradoxes. We find poverty in it – caused by an inhospitable natural environment, unfavourable demographic conditions, worsening political situation, and a lack of economic development. However,

<sup>97</sup> Credendo, "Vratké success story zo západnej Afriky," accessed May 12, 2019, [https://www.credendo.com/sk/country\\_risk\\_assessment/cote-divoire/vratke-success-story-zo-zapadnej-afriky](https://www.credendo.com/sk/country_risk_assessment/cote-divoire/vratke-success-story-zo-zapadnej-afriky).

<sup>98</sup> Namely Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin, Niger, Togo and Guinea-Bissau do not have to keep half their reserves in France or have a French emissary occupying a seat on their central bank. In David Pilling, "A revolution in Africa's relations with France is afoot," *Financial Times*, accessed May 7, 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/8894ad6e-2650-11ea-9a4f-963f0ec7e134>.

<sup>99</sup> A currency acronym originally stood for *Colonies françaises d'Afrique* (CFA). In: David Pilling, "A revolution in Africa's relations with France is afoot," *Financial Times*, accessed May 7, 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/8894ad6e-2650-11ea-9a4f-963f0ec7e134>.

<sup>100</sup> The *Françafrique* concept was first used by Félix Houphouët-Boigny to define the interconnection of countries that gained independence from their former colonizer. However, in post-colonial decades, this notion had largely no positive connotations. Due to the incidents in Rwanda and Zair (nowadays Democratic Republic of the Congo), as well as the supply of arms to Angola, which portrayed France as a harmful player in the African environment, the concept changed fundamentally in terms of content and defined rather "unfair French conditions. in Africa." In Pierre Péan, "France-Afrique, Françafrique, France à fric?," *Revue internationale et stratégique*, 2012/1 (n. 85), 117-124, <https://doi.org/10.3917/ris.085.0117>.



we can also find extraordinary wealth there – in the context of the diverse natural potential and mineral resources that encourage the world's advanced economies to take a prominent position in this strategic space to declare their power status, starting with the initial efforts to colonize Africa and ending with Africa itself being able to take full responsibility for the continent.

France as a hegemonic leader in the sub-Saharan region was aware that African policy in the traditional understanding no longer makes such a significant contribution as it did in the past, and needs to develop a novel approach that reflects the new political environment and preserves the French influence on the African continent. As Lombart highlights, a more pronounced shift in France's African policy occurred after Jacques Chirac succeeded in the presidential election in 1995, as it was described in the second chapter. Indeed, the very political situation on the African continent has undergone considerable development and the strategy of French military policy in Africa has changed as well.<sup>101</sup> We must acknowledge that the position of French diplomacy in African affairs is currently very complicated, as one of the few countries to have the political will and technical arsenal in the case of conflict to provide stability and peace in African countries. For this reason, France is criticized for its neo-colonial tendencies, according to which, under the pretext of ensuring peaceful conditions in the French-speaking African region, France pursues its own political and economic interests. Based on the theoretical model of neo-colonialism from which we drew in the research, we can identify a univocal military involvement of France in its former African colonies which was the main objective of the paper of analysing the continued French influence in Africa. However, the most recent development of French policy towards Africa suggests that a change in the rhetoric of the current presidential administration, as well as a decreasing number of the military presence, could represent a real turn in the mutual relations. The current French president Emmanuel Macron wants to focus more on education support, and infrastructure development rather than on active military engagement on the African continent, thereby building a new phase of Franco-African relations.

An essential part of this paper was the analysis of possible French neo-colonial ties on the example of one of the most flourishing colonies in francophone Africa – Côte d'Ivoire. According to Bovcon, conflict resolution in Côte d'Ivoire is one of the most recent examples of "hybrid operations" in which a former colonial power plays a substantial role. The legitimacy of France's military operation lies primarily in the fact of the belated intervention by the regional and international actors. However, reasons for the Ivorian crisis are partly rooted in the colonial past of the French management of Ivorian

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<sup>101</sup> Laurent Lombart, "La politique extérieure du président Jacques Chirac dans un monde américano-centré," accessed April 20, 2019, [https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/24\\_Lombart.pdf](https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/24_Lombart.pdf).

territory and society, which were continued after the independence by the Houphouët-Boigny regime. Thus, we admit that France is far from being a neutral party in the current conflict resolution strategy and may, to some extent, rule out the true reconciliation process. As we declared, France has played a decisive role in defining Côte d'Ivoire's political, economic, and social structure in the 20th century, given the presence of a historic French foreign policy towards the African continent. The gradual categorization of the population and the hierarchy of ethnic groups within the local population was the basis for the development of capitalism. The French colonial administration is therefore certainly partly responsible for inciting ethnic conflict in the country.

The main limitations of the presented paper result in a rather restricted understanding of neo-colonialism which might fail to consider certain more subtle aspects of neo-colonial practises. However, this facilitates focusing on the core substance of neo-colonialism in our perspective of the security-political determinant. Due to time and space constraints, the analysis only provided a minimal amount of important cases of economic influence in order to prove the presence of neo-colonialism at the military level. The space for discussion may not be whether a neo-colonial model is present, which we have demonstrated based on our contribution. It is present not only in the political-security determinant that was the subject under scrutiny, but also in the economic or cultural field. Due to the limited scope of the paper, it was not possible to devote the same space to each of these subtopics, but the main fragments of individual forms of neo-colonialism in the work were projected. We have chosen a military aspect, which from our point of view is little discussed. However, it is appropriate to ask whether the former colonial power is at all *able* to get rid of the accusations of neo-colonial practices. To speak of France, which during the colonial era used direct colonial rule while interacting with its colonies, is not easy to limit mutual linkage after a long-lasting presence in the region. Therefore, the conclusion of our contribution remains a clear provability of neo-colonial ties that does not necessarily have to be perceived as wrong, and it is appropriate to open a discussion on *whether* and under *what conditions* it is possible to get rid of these tendencies. By words of Jean-Christophe Rufin, former ambassador to Senegal, he believes that “the old, shadowy, compromising, cynical habits of trading political and business favours have just gotten more manipulative and opaque.”<sup>102</sup> Replacing direct rule for substantial influence may not be “colonial” per se, but neither is it a decisive break from the past.”<sup>103</sup> As one the key element of the ‘less dependence’ that Huxley

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<sup>102</sup> Bruce Crumley, “Ambassador Blasts France’s Relations with its African Allies,” accessed March 23, 2020, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2002788,00.html>.

<sup>103</sup> Benneyworth, “The Ongoing Relationship.”

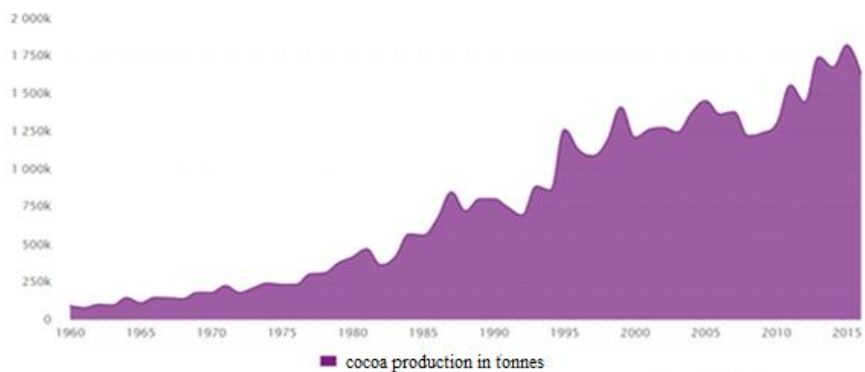
mentions is that “*education* could be the most important factor in the future destiny of the continent.”<sup>104</sup>

It is highly possible that if there is no open conflict on the African continent in the near future, French foreign policy towards Africa will be based on humanitarian aid, support for education and the development of economic relations, which is confirmed by the fact that the establishment of peace in African countries has taken place to reduce French troops in the area. We have declared this as an example of Operation Licorne in Côte d’Ivoire in the final part of the paper. After stabilizing the tense internal political situation in Côte d’Ivoire, the country is now considered a positive example of Franco-African relations. We assume that civil wars, enormous loss of life, and worsening economic and political situation are a memento for leaders of African countries not to repeat such events from history in the future. It is important to stress that as long as the regional and international institutions are not able to assume the desired leading role in the conflict resolution strategies, the former colonial powers will have to play a central role, despite all the possible suspicions and accusations of the neo-colonial practices.

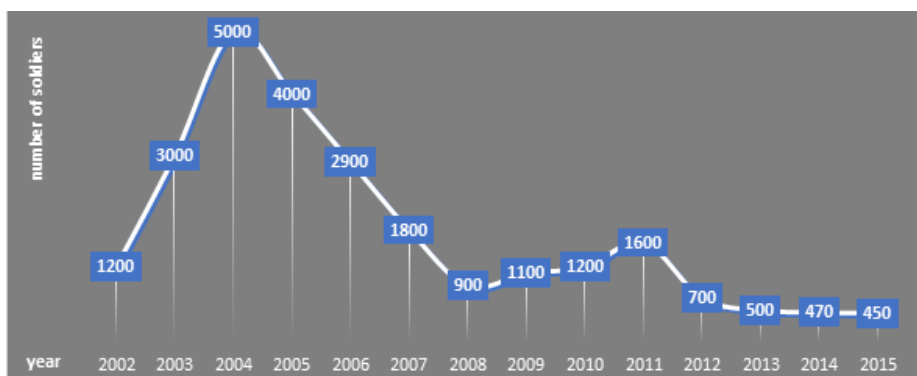
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<sup>104</sup> For deeper analysis, see Laurence M. Hauptman, *Africa View: John Collier, The British Colonial Service and American Indian Policy, 1933-1945* (Oxford: Taylor & Francis, Ltd., 1986), 372.

Annexes



**Figure 1. Cocoa production in Côte d'Ivoire in period 1960-2015**  
 Source: A Euromoney Institutional Investor Company, "Ivory Coast Industrial Production."



**Figure 2. French military presence during Operation Licorne in Côte d'Ivoire (2002-2015)**  
 Source: Ministère de la Défense, "Dossier de présentation de l'opération Licorne aux forces françaises en Côte d'Ivoire."