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***Exploring the Gradual Decline of France's Traditional Policy in Africa, from the 1990s to this New Era of Globalization***

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**Abstract**

France's traditional policy in Africa, born after the independence of cataclysms, does not know how to make exception to the fundamental notion of the life cycle. It was born, grew up, and continues to age as it heads towards its probable end of cycle — end of its history — as a result of its gradual and continuous decline. This paper therefore briefly outlines the gradual decline of France's traditional policy in Africa from the 1990s to this new era of globalization. The years of the Cold War between the United States and the USSR are well seen as those of the birth, growth and golden age of the said policy. Rather, the post-Cold War years between the US and the USSR are seen more as the years of its awakening, decline and probable end of history. From the years of its birth — the era of facade independence — to this new era of

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globalization, the said policy is seen moving from libertinage and coercive prescriber gendarme to "peacekeeper" and reserves; from collusion to the pronounced appearance of arm-wrestling and criticism; from tacit legitimacy to pronounced fed up; switches to the progressive breakdown of privileges, monopolies and abusive dominations; and from the open sky to hypocrisy, taboo and sacrilege. Finally, the question that arises here is: are we heading towards the end of history of the said policy?

**Keywords:** France Policy in Africa, African Politics, Neocolonial, New Era of Globalization

This short article is based on part of the results of our doctoral dissertation (Makengo, 2022). It aims to briefly describe the gradual decline of France's traditional policy in Africa from the 1990s to this new era of globalization — an era of great transformations, intense competition, new opportunities and complex. It is a continuation of our article explaining the reasons of the gradual decline and probable end of history of France's traditional policy in Africa in this new era of globalization — using Central African Republic and Mali as specific cases of concrete illustrations (Makengo & Zongshan). Also, it is part of the eschatological dimension and starts from a logic that we have called structural-effect, combining structural logic and its possible effects (Makengo, 2022).

Indeed, France's traditional policy in Africa — usually called "Françafrique" (Verschave, 1998) — refers here to France's evolving neo-colonial policy on the African continent and in its sub-Saharan bosom in particular, taking on several dimensions at once: economic-financial, political, security, socio-cultural.... It has its origins in the distant past — from the era of French colonization in Africa to the Façade Independence, and from the Façade Independence to its Birth — in the aftermath of the independence of cataclysms (Thimonier, 2006). It is defined and founded in four (4) major conceptions that implicitly constitute its pillars: (i) The Foccartism, (ii) economic-financial domination, exploitation, influence and control, (iii) military domination, influence and control, and (iv) cultural domination, influence and control (Thimonier, 2006; Traoré, 2019; Verschave, 1998). Its operationalization is made and becoming possible via a vast and complex network of actors including the alternative French presidents and their ruling class [from De Gaulle to Macron], the "African leaders of compromise", the businessmen, multinational companies, the media, secret services and mercenaries (Bancel, 2002; Thimonier, 2006; Traoré, 2019;

Verschave, 2000; Verschave, 1998; Verschave, 2004; Glaser, 2014; Glaser & Airault, 2021). And its existential and conservation reasons are: the interests of power and autonomy of France, the economic and financial interests, the interests of unclean money accumulation, and the interests of power and illicit enrichment of African leaders (Traoré, 2019; Thimonier, 2006; Verschave, 2000; Verschave, 1998; Verschave, 2004).

This so-called France's traditional policy in Africa had its fair share of success during the Cold War period between the United States and the USSR — considered to be the period of its golden age (Thimonier, 2006; Verschave, 1998). Rather, since the 1990s, everything has turned against it — its delinquent tendency is increasingly observed (Hugon, 2007; Marchesin, 1998). The shift in the African international structure in the 1990s has ostensibly worked against France's traditional policy in Africa. These include the rise of the wind of democratization or re-democratization in the 1990s following the end of the Cold War between the United States and the USSR — which followed the La Baule speech of June 20, 1990; the fiascos and negative impacts of French interventions on the continent in the 1990s — to mention here only the case of Rwanda following the 1994 Rwandan genocide; and the reforms of the European Union based on the 1992 Maastricht Treaty — advocating, among other things, common security and foreign policy among the members of the union (Hugon, 2007; Marchesin, 1998).

Since the beginning of this twenty-first century, the said France's traditional policy in Africa has not ceased to be ostensibly shaken by the new wind of dynamisms and mutations at the level of the international structure and within the African continent (김태수, 2016). A strong dynamism ostensibly driven by the so-called "BRICS" emerging powers, that is, the countries [Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa] — [but also by other emerging powers on the continent, including Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates], which have markets with high growth capacity that can compete on equal terms and in many areas with the G7 countries [the United States, Japan, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, and Canada] in Africa (Badie & Vidal, 2021; Makengo, 2020; Paczyńska, 2020; Hugon, 2010). This dynamism of the rise of the emerging powers at the level of the African international structure does not cease to be accompanied [by its effects] by internal mutations, internal changes in the African continent, including that of the wind of the rise of a new anti-neocolonial public opinion in Africa and in the sub-Saharan bosom of France in particular (Badie & Vidal, 2021; Mbembe, 2021).

From Chirac [during the last three years of his first term, including his second term], Sarkozy, Hollande to Macron, the said policy never ceases to be seen in progressive decline and on its way to its probable end of history (Badie & Vidal, 2021; Mbembe, 2021). Passing:

- ❖ ***Firstly, from prescriptive coercion to "Peacekeeper" and reserves:*** from the policy of homework, and various interferences and open-air sanctions to the various "peacekeeping" operations on the continent, to name a few: Barkhane [2014-] in the Sahel : Mali, Chad, Niger, Mauritania and Burkina Faso; Sangaris [2013-2016] in the Central African Republic; Serval [January 2013-July 2014] in Mali; Harmattan [March 2011] in Libya; Licorne [September 2002-January 2015] in Côte d'Ivoire and Epervier [February 1986-July 2014] in Chad (Erforth, 2020; Badie & Vidal, 2021; Mbembe, 2021; Traoré, 2019; Poulton & Tonegutti, 2021).
- ❖ ***Secondly, from collusion to the emergence of arm wrestling and criticism:*** friendships constantly turn into enmities, creating arm wrestling — to pinpoint here only the cases of Benin following the re-election of Patrick Talon, Chad with Idriss Déby, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) with Joseph Kabila, Mali with Assimi Goïta, Central Africa Republic with Faustin-Archange Touadéra (Glaser, 2014; Poulton & Tonegutti, 2021).
- ❖ ***Thirdly, from tacit legitimacy to pronounced fed up:*** to cite here only the cases of Mali — following the fiasco of the Barkhane operation — of the Central African Republic — following the fiasco of the Sangaris operation — of the rise of Urgences panafricanistes and the Front anti-CFA of Kémi Séba, and of the frustration expressed by the new African generation during the 28<sup>th</sup> Africa-France summit held in Montpellier from October 7 to 8, 2021 (IFF, 2020; Badie & Vidal, 2021; Mbembe, 2021; Traoré, 2019; Poulton & Tonegutti, 2021).
- ❖ ***Fourthly, from control and stranglehold to the progressive break-up of privileges, monopolies and dominations:*** to mention here only Macron's new deal fiasco for the "financing" of African economies and the fluctuating findings of France's trade volumes that are observed in a downward trend in the Central African Republic, Mali, and many other francophone countries (COFACE, 2018; Mbembe, 2021).
- ❖ ***And fifthly, from the open sky to hypocrisy, taboo and sacrilege:*** Chirac ended up

not being the "African" anymore, from Sarkozy, Hollande to Macron, no one wants to publicly endorse the said France's traditional policy in Africa — to point out here that the cases of the Dakar speeches of July 2007 and October 2012, the Ouagadougou speech of November 2017 and the 28<sup>th</sup> Africa-France summit of October 2021 (Badie & Vidal, 2021; Mbembe, 2021; Traoré, 2019).

## Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to make a brief sketch of the gradual decline of France's traditional policy in Africa, from the 1990s to this new era of globalization. After analysis and discussion, we note here that the said policy, born after the independences of cataclysms, has come a long way during the period of the US-USSR cold war — known as the period of its golden age. Rather, since the 1990s, everything has been shifting in its disadvantage. We can observe more and more a delinquent tendency of the said policy. In this twenty-first century — the new era of globalization, the decline of the said policy is becoming more and more evident to the point of making many to believe in its probable end of history. From the years of its birth — the era of independence of cataclysms, to this new era of globalization, the said policy is seen moving from libertinage and coercive prescriber gendarme to "peacekeeper" and reserves; from collusion to the pronounced appearance of arm-wrestling and criticism; from tacit legitimacy to pronounced fed up; switches to the progressive breakdown of privileges, monopolies and abusive dominations; and from the open sky to hypocrisy, taboo and sacrilege. Finally, the question that arises here is: are we heading towards the end of history of the said policy?

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