

21st Century Françafrique in Côte d'Ivoire: A Study on Modern French Neocolonialism

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After the fall of France's second colonial empire in 1960, France retained many of the economic, political, and cultural benefits of colonialism. This French sphere of influence was known as Françafrique and lasted from 1960 through the 1990s. During the 1990s, Françafrique ostensibly declined due to scandals and growing international criticism. The extent of Françafrique's decline, and whether any decline was meaningful or ceremonial, is debated. In what ways is Françafrique still relevant as a label today? This research examines the extent to which Françafrique exists in the 21st century by using Côte d'Ivoire as a case study. First, three schools of thought are presented on Françafrique's robustness: the ideological school, the regime theory school, and the Afrocentric school. Then, Françafrique's five concrete observable implications are analyzed during the Françafrique period and again in the 21st century. Then, overall trends and takeaways are evaluated, considering all implications and their changes over time. The extent to which Françafrique exists today is best understood through a combination of all three hypotheses, and possibly more. More recent attitudes of French officials, for example, might not fit any proposed hypothesis. While no one hypothesis emerged as an encompassing explanation of modern Françafrique, these results show that Françafrique is still robust and an appropriate label to use when discussing Franco-Ivorian relations. While no implication studied here looks exactly the same in the 21st century as it did from 1960 to the 1990s, each demonstrated some continuation of Françafrique, whether concrete or ideological.

France's second colonial empire encompassed the most territory of any colonial empire on the African continent. France's colonial empire in Africa began in the early to mid-19th century and lasted until the mid to late 20th century. French colonialism "was characterized by sharp contradictions between a rhetorical commitment to the 'civilization' of indigenous people through cultural, political, and economic reform, and the harsh realities of violent conquest, economic exploitation, legal inequality, and sociocultural disruption" (1). Even after the colonial empire's fall in 1960, French leaders actively maintained close, neocolonial relationships with former sub-Saharan African colonies. Through these relationships, France retained many of the economic, political, and cultural benefits of colonialism. This French sphere of influence was known as Françafrique¹, a combination of the French words for France and Africa. The Françafrique period, characterized by French neocolonialism and preserved by elite relationships, began with African independences in 1960² and lasted through the 1990s. During the 1990s, Françafrique declined due to several scandals and growing international criticism, especially surrounding France's involvement in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. However, the extent of Françafrique's decline,

and whether any decline was meaningful or simply ceremonial, is debated. It can be said that Françafrique is nothing more than a disguised, modern colonialism, and this paper seeks to investigate the ways in which Françafrique is still relevant as a label today. In what political, economic, and cultural ways is Françafrique still manifesting? Do elite attitudes still reflect a Françafrique mentality? To answer these questions, this analysis will examine the extent to which Françafrique exists in the 21st century by using Côte d'Ivoire as a case study. In sum, research found that Françafrique is still robust and still an accurate term to describe Franco-Ivorian relations in the 21st century.

To move forward with this analysis, it is important to define Françafrique straightaway, as it can be a somewhat nebulous word. The word only applies to sub-Saharan, former French colonies.³ The neologism France-Afrique was first used in 1956 by Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the first president of Côte d'Ivoire, to describe the strong relationship between his country and its then-colonizer, France (2). Houphouët-Boigny was using the term with a positive connotation, in which he viewed France's involvement in African affairs as a benefit (2). France-Afrique was later changed to Françafrique, and the word soon developed a negative undercurrent. The basic

1. Originally France-Afrique, coined by President Félix Houphouët-Boigny of Côte d'Ivoire in 1956; restyled as Françafrique by economist and author François-Xavier Verschave in 1998.

2 All French sub-Saharan colonies (listed in Footnote 3) except Guinea gained independence in 1960. Guinea gained independence in 1958.

3 These countries are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo. Note that at the time of colonization, the names and/or borders of some colonies were different, but current names are used here.

objectives of colonialism and Françafrique were largely the same: recognizing that continuity is important to understanding Françafrique. The word Françafrique was often evoked to call attention to France's persistent, colonial attitude, as well as the exploitative relationships that were set up to benefit elites. The nature and extent of Françafrique can be defined as follows:

Françafrique was maintained on cultural, military, economic and political levels and by various institutional (franc zone, military, cultural, trade agreements), semi-institutional (Franco-African summits), and non-institutional means...the Franco-African relationship was highly personalised, relying on the personal friendships of important individuals on both sides. These official and semi-official networks reinforced the sense of a familial solidarity and obligation between the French and African economic and political elites (2).

This passage highlights the all-encompassing nature of Françafrique and its continuation of colonial objectives. It also points out the importance of elite relationships to the functioning of the system. This analysis will explore how the different levels of Françafrique have changed or stayed the same over time. As previously stated, this paper uses Côte d'Ivoire as a case study. The research undertaken in this paper reveals that while Françafrique is not the same as it was from 1960 to the 1990s, it has not vanished, either. Furthermore, no one hypothesis can explain all the facets of Françafrique. Rather, a comprehensive approach that examines the ideological school, the regime theory school, and the Afrocentric school is the best way to understand the extent of Françafrique in the 21st century.

This paper proceeds as follows. The next section describes the existing schools of thought in the literature and presents the corresponding hypotheses. The section that follows explains the logic of the case selection, defines key concepts, and explains the data and methodology. Next, the findings of this analysis are presented and analyzed. Finally, the conclusion emphasizes important findings and suggests avenues for future research.

Literature Review

There are three schools of thought on how Françafrique manifests in the 21st century: the ideological school, the regime theory school, and the Afrocentric school. Each school has some elements of overlap with the others. While the schools might not agree on every detail, the best understanding of

Françafrique's presence in 21st century Franco-African relations is through a comprehensive approach that looks at all three schools together.

Ideological School

The ideological school posits that Françafrique manifests today as the "ideological discourse that organizes Franco-African relations" (3). This school asserts that Françafrique's political and cultural ideology have not disappeared. An ideology of Françafrique, which can be understood as a continuation of the neocolonial mentality under Françafrique, survives for two reasons. The first reason is French nostalgia for an illustrious, colonial past and the accompanying fear of France losing its place as a cultural and political power (4). The second reason postulates that already-present roles, networks, and political mechanisms have enabled actors to continue with the same basic practices as during Françafrique (3). The ideological school claims that elements like ongoing relationships between political elites enable Françafrique to live on in a less formal manner. The cultural mentality of Françafrique is thus supported in tangible ways, and it manifests itself in present-day policy decisions. France still pursues cultural ties through policies with former sub-Saharan colonies, even as leaders insist that neocolonial ideology is not a factor in France's policy towards Africa (3). Furthermore, this school points out that French political campaigns, mostly those of the center-right, evoke France's colonial past to garner votes based on the nostalgia of Françafrique ideology (5).

In sum, the ideological school argues that the "special relationship" between France and its former, sub-Saharan colonies persists as more of a "bad habit" in the form of political and cultural ideology than as a formal policy of neocolonialism (3). The hypothesis presented by the ideological school is that if Françafrique exists only as an ideological framework, Françafrique's concrete observable implications, which are defined later, would not be in evidence, except those relating to attitudes.

Regime Theory School

The regime theory school proposes that Françafrique today is more akin to an international regime than to a patron-client relationship. This school uses regime theory to argue that while Françafrique has been in decline, it is not yet extinct. Regime theory argues that the world is divided into powers and their spheres of influence. Through this lens, France is the power while former French colonies make up France's sphere of influence. The powerful, informal relationships that

characterize *Françafrique* mean that the system can be essentially understood as one regime (2). The regime theory school argues that the legacy of *Françafrique* is applied inconsistently by French political actors; *Françafrique* is not the formal structure that it was in the mid- to late 20th century, but it is also not absent from Franco-African relations. This school presents three factors that enable the persistence of *Françafrique*: France's wish to hide its declining global power, African leaders' utilization of *Françafrique* for their own benefit, and the "apparent inability" of elites on both sides to design and implement another structure (2). Regime theory treats *Françafrique* as a hegemonic system in decline.

The regime theory school is more complex than the other schools of thought and can be seen as an umbrella under which other schools fall. Bovcon evokes three, slightly older schools of thought to explain *Françafrique* as part of regime theory. Bovcon calls these schools the normalization paradigm, the incremental adaptation paradigm, and the confusion paradigm, respectively (2). She first references Médard, who argued that Franco-African relations became normalized (leaving a neocolonial state) out of economic and political need, rather than out of a desire to change (6). Importantly, Médard emphasizes that French policy has never been in response to African needs – it is always influenced by France's "civilizing mission" and its own specific interests (6). Second, Bovcon references Chafer, whose work refutes that of Médard. Chafer argues that recent French action in sub-Saharan Africa is "reactive and incremental," setting it in contrast with *Françafrique* (7). Chafer directly disagrees with the theory of normalization, pointing out that the "emotional force" of symbols and popular memory of colonization will prevent the sort of normalization for which Médard argues (7). Finally, Bovcon references Bayart, who argues that France is "confused" in its African policy, resulting from France's declining role in sub-Saharan Africa (8).

Bovcon argues that these schools are like "three corners of a triangle" and any situation involving Franco-African relations today falls somewhere in between (2). It is important to include these three theories as part of regime theory, as they highlight the interdependence of theories regarding *Françafrique*'s presence in modern Franco-African relations, and they are proof of the ever-changing, difficult-to-define nature of Franco-African relations. The hypothesis derived from the regime theory school is that if *Françafrique* as a regime is in decline (but not yet extinct), all concrete observable implications should show meaningful decreases.

Afrocentric School

The Afrocentric school proposes that the whole discourse surrounding modern *Françafrique* is too Eurocentric and ignores the actions of Africans. After instances of recent French involvement in African political crises, the media criticized a perceived revival of *Françafrique* and the unwanted imposition of French wishes on former African colonies. However, the Afrocentric school argues that the media's outlook is both too simplistic and too Eurocentric. Political reorganization and a rise in democratic systems were occurring in Africa during the 1990s at the same time as the decline of *Françafrique*. By the late 1990s, only four of the forty-seven sub-Saharan countries had not held multiparty presidential or parliamentary elections, which was a drastic change from 1989, when just five of these countries had democratic, multiparty systems in place (9). Since this major restructuring, African organizations, such as the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), have exercised increasing political action, such as formally sanctioning leaders for undemocratic actions. The Afrocentric school points to how groups like the AU and ECOWAS have a consistent track record of denouncing coups and acting against political actors who go against established, democratic processes in African countries (9). These organizations can call on the UN to help reestablish order, and that is how outside organizations like the French military become involved.

The Afrocentric school is an important reminder for scholars to take a closer look at internal actions in situations where French intervention occurs before automatically labeling them as a revival of *Françafrique*. The Afrocentric school fills a gap in the literature, as African actors' autonomy is often ignored in discussions of Franco-African relations. They are mainly discussed in relation to French action or French policy. The hypothesis presented by the Afrocentric school is that if *Françafrique* does not exist today and is only perpetuated by Eurocentrism, the concrete observable implications would show a meaningful decline, and there would also be a notable shift in attitudes of African leaders that would reflect the claims of this explanation.

Research Design

Case Selection

This paper focuses on French relations with Côte d'Ivoire to analyze *Françafrique* in the 21st century. By studying one country instead of several, more dimensions of *Françafrique* can be studied, resulting in a more robust analysis. Côte d'Ivoire became a

French colony in 1893 and gained independence in 1960. President Félix Houphouët-Boigny was elected in 1960 and remained president until his death in 1993. There is scholarly consensus, as Bovcon writes, that “Côte d’Ivoire was the epitome of Françafrique under President Félix Houphouët-Boigny” (3). As earlier stated, Houphouët-Boigny himself coined the neologism France-Afrique (later: Françafrique). During his presidency, Côte d’Ivoire was “an economic engine of francophone West Africa” and “the exemplar of France’s successful decolonization and of the close and amicable Franco-African relationship” (2). However, the death of Houphouët-Boigny in 1993, which coincided with the general decline of Françafrique in the 1990s, was followed by a period of Ivorian instability. Controversial elections, civil wars, and coups occurred. Notably, after the political-military crisis of 2010-11, the International Criminal Court tried former Ivorian president Laurent Gbagbo with crimes against humanity.

Despite all the turmoil that has occurred in Côte d’Ivoire’s recent history, Bovcon believes that because of the country’s past as the archetype of Françafrique, France would try to preserve its neocolonial system in Côte d’Ivoire, if anywhere (2). Therefore, it makes sense to study modern Françafrique in Côte d’Ivoire; if Françafrique still exists in a meaningful way, it will likely be in Côte d’Ivoire. The literature on Françafrique and French neocolonialism contains a significant amount of information on Côte d’Ivoire. The scholarly attention that is given to Côte d’Ivoire is further proof that it will be an effective case study. While the results of this analysis might not be applicable to all former sub-Saharan French colonies, it will provide a good starting point to assess the viability of Françafrique today. From there, further research can be done on other, former sub-Saharan colonies to see if the same trends exist.

Defining Key Concepts

Françafrique is the key term in this analysis. As mentioned above, the neologism Françafrique refers to the neocolonial, often exploitative relationships between France and its former, sub-Saharan African colonies. It is a continuation of objectives and behaviors from the colonial period. Françafrique relies on relationships between elites on both sides. It manifests in political, economic, cultural, and military ways and is upheld both formally and informally.

Neocolonialism is another important term to define. Neocolonialism is “the control of less-developed countries by developed countries through indirect means...to produce a colonial-like exploitation” (10). Under neocolonialism, powerful countries, or sometimes corporations, practice the basic principles of colonial

exploitation without technical colonial rule.

This analysis will look at Françafrique’s concrete observable implications to compare Françafrique in the 20th century to its 21st century iteration. The concepts defined here as Françafrique’s concrete observable implications are not all-encompassing due to the limitations in time and space of this analysis. However, the concepts chosen for this paper are important implications of Françafrique in the 20th century, and their presence, or lack thereof, will speak to how robust Françafrique is in the 21st century. These concrete observable implications are language policy, defense pacts, military intervention, the CFA franc zone, attitudes of French officials towards former, sub-Saharan colonies and France’s colonial past, and attitudes of Ivorian officials towards France and French involvement.

Language policy refers to what languages are allowed in local schools. During colonial rule, French was the only language allowed in French West African colonies; teachers and students were not permitted to speak in their native language (11). Language policies in schools create clear, cultural implications, and many of these French-only policies remained in place during Françafrique. This paper will qualitatively examine how language policies in Côte d’Ivoire today compare to language policies under Françafrique.

Defense pacts and military interventions capture the military component of Françafrique. Many former African colonies signed defense treaties with France after they gained independence in 1960. These treaties allowed the French military to intervene to keep peace. They were a supposed gesture of goodwill to help former colonies develop stability. However, it is widely acknowledged that France would only support African leaders that acquiesced to French interests (12). This paper will look at the current state of any defense pacts and recent military interventions to determine Françafrique’s persistence in military matters.

The CFA franc zone currently consists of fourteen countries who use the CFA franc. Countries have joined and left the franc zone over time. France created the CFA franc after World War II, and the currency is set at a fixed exchange rate to French currency (formerly the franc, currently the euro). The currency is controversial because of its fixed rate to French currency and because African member countries are required to store 50% of their currency reserves with France (13). The currency is seen by some as a hallmark of France’s neocolonial wish to keep controlling African affairs. This analysis will look at Côte d’Ivoire’s membership status over time and recent developments to the CFA franc zone.

Attitudes of officials on both sides are important to understanding Françafrique in the 21st century, as

Françafrique is highly personalized and is sustained by elite relationships. This analysis will focus on attitudes of heads of state. It will examine current attitudes of French and Ivorian officials and compare them to attitudes from the Françafrique period. Attitude is the most difficult of the concrete observable implications to assess. First, statements and behaviors of French officials that reflect attitudes about former sub-Saharan colonies and France’s colonial past will be analyzed. References are generally broader than just Côte d’Ivoire, as it was difficult to find specific attitudes towards Côte d’Ivoire, but the definition and implications still hold true. Second, this analysis will look at attitudes of Ivorian officials towards French involvement and the Françafrique system.

Data and Methodology

This paper relies largely on academic articles and news reports to collect data, which is mostly qualitative. These sources include accounts of Franco-African relations and related topics, as well as some quotations from first-person actors such as heads of state. A qualitative approach fits the nature of the research question, which cannot be answered in a solely quantitative way. However, statistics and data are used to support findings when appropriate. This data also comes from academic articles and news reports. One limitation of the research is that because the 21st century, the time period in question, is currently ongoing, there is a lack of scholarly work on more recent developments. In those areas of research, news reports are the main source of information.

The methodology proceeds as follows. First, three hypotheses were developed after the identification of the three schools of thought, which were based on current academic literature. Then, the categories of Françafrique’s concrete observable implications were developed based on all sources’ signals to the most prevalent and significant implications of Françafrique. Each implication was analyzed during the Françafrique period from 1960 to the 1990s and again in the 21st century. The changes, or lack thereof, between the two time periods were noted. Those changes, coupled with the current state of affairs for each implication, was used to determine which hypothesis or hypotheses the implication supported. Finally, overall trends and takeaways were evaluated, considering all implications and their changes over time.

Findings and Analysis

In this section, Françafrique’s concrete observable

implications, as defined above, are each analyzed comparatively to examine how they have changed or stayed the same from the Françafrique period to the 21st century. The results, which are summarized in Table 1 below, do not support one sole hypothesis. The extent to which Françafrique exists in the 21st century is best understood through a combination of all three hypotheses, and possibly more. More recent attitudes of French officials, for example, might not fit any proposed hypothesis. While no one hypothesis emerged as an encompassing explanation of modern Françafrique, these results show that Françafrique has not died out. While the implications of Françafrique have changed in varying degrees from the 1990s to present day, no component has ceased existing. This analysis shows that the neologism Françafrique is still a relevant and accurate way to describe Franco-Ivorian relations. The concrete observable implications of Françafrique are all still prevailing markers of a continuing Françafrique. Analyses of the degree of change for each implication follow in the subsections below Table 1.

Table 1. Hypothesis/Hypotheses Supported and Basic Results for Each Implication.

Concrete Observable Implication	Hypothesis/Hypotheses Supported	Basic Findings
Language Policy	Ideological hypothesis	Virtually no change.
Defense Pacts and Military Intervention	Afrocentric and regime theory hypotheses	Regional African organizations are now powerful actors. Ongoing defense pacts invoked to uphold democracy.
CFA Franc Zone	Regime theory hypothesis	Until recently, no change. Upcoming replacement of CFA franc with the ECO.
Attitudes of French Officials	Ideological hypothesis / Does not fit any hypothesis	Before Macron, fundamental continuation of attitudes. Macron began a positive shift in rhetoric.
Attitudes of Ivorian Officials	Regime theory hypothesis	Double-sided attitude from Gbagbo. Ouattara’s is more positive but perhaps a reversal.

Language Policy

After Côte d’Ivoire gained independence in 1960, French remained the official national language and the language of education in the country throughout the Françafrique period. Françafrique language policy can be seen as a continuation of colonial language policy. During this time period, both French and Ivorian officials publicly presented French as a superior language. They declared that local languages could not express “modern scientific concepts,” and that officially using any native language would just lead to tribal warfare (14). President Houphouët-Boigny was reported in 1981 to have said that local languages were “a folklore that

reminds us of the shame of the past and paralyzes our economy” (14). These ideas about language superiority are obviously unsound and hallmarks of both colonialism and neocolonialism. They were created to explain the implementation of French-only policies in colonies, and they persisted during *Françafrique*, when France and Côte d’Ivoire maintained a close relationship.

France’s interest in language policy is important to understanding *Françafrique* and the French interest in preserving colonial systems. This interest is not solely economic or political. France benefits from language policy by establishing the French language as a global language, playing into the ideas of French grandeur and continuing global power. Instilling French language and culture in colonial or neocolonial settings allows the sense of importance that accompanied colonialism to continue.

Today, French remains the official language and the language of education in Côte d’Ivoire from kindergarten onwards (14). Nothing has really changed in terms of language policy since *Françafrique*. The first argument presented by Ivorian officials concerning the lack of change in language policy is that there are too many local languages, so it would be impractical or cause violence to choose just one to implement. Language diversity has been widely acknowledged in Côte d’Ivoire, but Djité argues that this perceived, overwhelming language diversity is inaccurate. He suggests that political elites talk of extreme language diversity to explain the lack of change to the system; from Djité’s own research, there are really only four groups of languages in Côte d’Ivoire, rather than the dozens that are often cited (14). Djité also points out that Côte d’Ivoire had sophisticated sociopolitical systems before French colonialism, which would not have been possible if everyone spoke different languages.

This official stance on language diversity as the reason for inaction gives way to a second reason: language attitudes. The ideas about French superiority and local language inferiority persist. Djité writes, “Education in French is seen as the only way to move up the socio-economic ladder; put colloquially, the greater the pain, the greater the gain” (14). This widespread attitude is the result of lingering effects of French efforts and a persistent belief by Ivorian elites that French is the way to internationalism. However, keeping French language policies has not led to the kind of success for which elites and the general population hope. 59.9% of the general population in Côte d’Ivoire is illiterate in French, so they do not have a strong knowledge of French from the education system, and local languages were never formally taught in schools (14). In practice, French proficiency is thus largely limited to elites.

The current state of language policy in Côte d’Ivoire

and the attitudes behind it support the ideological school. French language policy is not being pushed by French liaisons, but rather persists primarily because of local attitudes around language, which are largely unchanged since the *Françafrique* period. The ideological school proposes that *Françafrique* exists today due to ideological mechanisms of reproduction, and the language policy reflects that.

Defense Pacts and Military Intervention

Like many other, former French colonies, Côte d’Ivoire signed a defense pact with France shortly after gaining independence. In 1961, France and Côte d’Ivoire signed an agreement that permitted the Ivorian government to call for French military aid to protect its authority (15). Côte d’Ivoire experienced stability through the *Françafrique* period, largely because it only had one president during that time. There was no need for military intervention because there were no concerns over power transitions. During the *Françafrique* period, Côte d’Ivoire was known for being stable in a region that often experienced coups and other forms of political violence (16). While the defense pact was in place to back Houphouët-Boigny, it really was not needed during the *Françafrique* years. However, his death caused a power vacuum that has led to instability and violence in the 21st century. When looking at French military action in Côte d’Ivoire in the 21st century, it is more helpful to compare it to overall military involvement during the *Françafrique* years. Certainly, the promise of French military backing gave Houphouët-Boigny power, but he did not need to invoke it in for it to have the desired effects.

France has clear economic reasons to maintain military relationships (such as through the defense pacts) with former sub-Saharan colonies. 3% of French exports go to Africa, 240,000 French nationals live in Africa, and Africa is an important supplier of oil and metals for France (17). Furthermore, France bolsters its image as a world power through military action in Africa, and African countries often cast supportive votes at the U.N. on important global issues such as climate change (17). It is widely understood, but officially unspoken, that the French military provides aid in exchange for such privileges.

Today, France is still present in Côte d’Ivoire in terms of defense and military. In 2012, then-French president Nicolas Sarkozy and Ivorian president Alassane Ouattara signed a new defense treaty that replaced the 1961 treaty, giving Ouattara the same direct line to French military aid that existed during the *Françafrique* years (15). The French military has intervened several times

in the 21st century, first as part of Operation Licorne⁴ starting in 2002 and again after the political-military crisis in 2011, during which then-President Laurent Gbagbo refused to acknowledge Alassane Ouattara as the newly elected president.

Bassett and Straus claim that a French intervention in 2011 is perhaps not as reminiscent of Françafrique as it first seems. In their analysis of the events leading up to French military action in the 2011 crisis, Bassett and Straus argue that the French intervention is a sign of African regional strength and African desire to uphold democracy, rather than a French neocolonial desire to create a new Françafrique (9). They describe how the AU and ECOWAS, two regional African governmental organizations, denounced Côte d'Ivoire and Gbagbo's actions and formally called upon the UN Security Council to "use all necessary means" to remove Gbagbo, institute Ouattara, and keep civilians safe (9). This call for international backing was only done when it was evident that Gbagbo would not step down peacefully. The United Nations Security Council authorized both French and UN forces to take action. In the end, Ouattara, who democratically won the election, was instated as president.

Subsequently, the media presented the French military involvement in Côte d'Ivoire as an attempt at a new Françafrique, but Bassett and Straus argue that they are missing all the work that African organizations like the AU and ECOWAS did prior to requesting outside help. Also, the media is missing the fact that the French were called upon to uphold a democratically elected official, not to keep a dictator in power. The French military does have a record of upholding corrupt or authoritarian rulers in Africa, playing into the Françafrique method of supporting leaders based on their allegiance to France. However, this was not the case in 2011 in Côte d'Ivoire.

The state of military interventions seems to uphold the Afrocentric hypotheses, wherein more attention needs to be paid to African actors in any discussions of a modern Françafrique. This example fits the proposal that modern discussions of Françafrique are too Eurocentric. However, the ongoing defense pact lends support to the regime theory hypotheses, which proposes that systemic Françafrique practices are continuing. It seems like this concrete observable implication does not fit neatly into a single hypothesis.

CFA Franc Zone

The CFA franc zone was founded after World War II, while Côte d'Ivoire was still a French colony.

⁴ Operation Licorne was started in 2002 independently of the U.N., and the defense pact between France and Côte d'Ivoire was invoked to avoid civil war. In this paper, the analysis will focus on the 2011 intervention, as it is more recent and therefore more relevant given the limits of this paper.

CFA membership was part of Françafrique from the beginning. The rate of the CFA franc was fixed to French currency, and African member countries were required to store 50% of their currency reserves with France (13). Additionally, each member country could only access 20% of their revenue from the prior year, and 20% must remain for "sight liabilities" (13). Critics argue that these rules imposed significant limitations on development. In any case, they exemplify France's continued control during the Françafrique years. From the 1950s to the 1980s, Côte d'Ivoire had an average inflation rate of 6%, which was low relative to non-CFA neighbors; soon after this period, Côte d'Ivoire's GDP growth rates stopped improving, and the CFA became overvalued after economic downfalls of 1986 to 1993 (13). France devalued the CFA franc in 1994, from 50 CFA francs to 100 CFA francs per French franc, leading to disorder and protest across West Africa over the economic consequences of this devaluation (13). As a whole, the CFA franc zone shows how France maintained an economic grip on Côte d'Ivoire and other countries during Françafrique.

Côte d'Ivoire is still a member of the CFA franc zone today, along with 13 other Western and Central African countries. CFA membership, as a component of Françafrique, has remained unchanged. This speaks to a formal continuation of Françafrique, which the regime theory hypothesis proposes. However, recent developments might signal changes to that reality. While in Côte d'Ivoire in December 2019, French president Emmanuel Macron announced the end of the CFA franc at a joint conference with Ivorian president Alassane Ouattara (18). A new currency called the ECO will supposedly be launched in 2020. While this currency will still be tied to the euro, countries will no longer be required to keep 50% of their reserves with France, and they will no longer be required to have a French representative on the currency's board (18). This is part of Macron's plan to mend Franco-African relations and move away from the Françafrique model. President Ouattara supported the change. Macron has reiterated that he is making this change in response to the wishes of African leaders, and he wants to work with them to achieve their visions of Franco-African relations, not just France's vision, as was the practice under Françafrique. While this new currency is a likely marker of declining neocolonialism, the degree of positive change that it represents is debatable. The fact that the new currency will still be tied to the euro means that former colonies like Côte d'Ivoire are not yet monetarily separated from France. Because this is such a recent development, only time will tell its effectiveness. The overall trend in the 21st century fulfills the regime theory hypothesis of a continued but declining Françafrique.

Attitudes of French Officials

During *Françafrique*, French officials' attitudes were blatantly neocolonial. While many aspects of *Françafrique* were not public knowledge or something that French officials would openly promote, their public statements sufficiently demonstrate the pervasiveness of their neocolonial attitudes towards former African colonies. Charles de Gaulle, the French president from 1959 to 1969, believed that maintaining links with former African colonies was the route to world power status for France (19). De Gaulle was president during the 1960s, when African colonies gained independence. His vision effectively set *Françafrique* into motion, or at least France's belief that maintaining neocolonial relationships with Africa was key to reviving French "grandeur" (19). This attitude is also seen in statements by French President Georges Pompidou (1969-74). During a press conference in 1972, Pompidou was asked to comment on protests in N'Djamena, Chad, over French neocolonialism in the country. Irritated, Pompidou replied, "Yes, of course we are neo-colonialists. The proof lies in the fact that we are trying to help this country; we are granting her financial aid. If that is neo-colonialism, then long live neo-colonialism" (20). During *Françafrique*, French leaders were openly promoting and defending their neocolonial role in former colonies, which was not simply financial aid as Pompidou claimed.

Today, attitudes of French officials towards former colonies and towards France's colonial past have changed, but only very recently. In 2007, French President Nicolas Sarkozy gave a now-infamous speech in Dakar, Senegal, in which he said, "[The African] has not fully entered history...They have never really launched themselves into the future" (21). This is a clear continuation of neocolonial attitudes. However, in 2012, President François Hollande made a concerted effort to turn over a new page in Franco-African relations. While also in Dakar, he gave a speech declaring the end of *Françafrique* and the beginning of new, transparent Franco-African relations (22).

Emmanuel Macron, the current president, represents a stark change in rhetoric, but hesitation is necessary before labeling his presidency a complete departure from *Françafrique* attitudes. While campaigning for president in 2017, Macron said in Algeria that colonization was "a crime against humanity...it's part of a past that we need to confront by apologising to those against whom we committed these acts" (23). No French leader before him had ever issued any kind of apology or even an acknowledgement of the trauma of colonialism. While Algeria was not part of *Françafrique*, this campaign

quote helps illustrate Macron's viewpoint. His vocal and honest rhetoric on France's status as a colonizer is remarkable for a country that has been silent about both colonialism and neocolonialism for so long. The campaign quote also helps contextualize Macron's decisions to change systems like the CFA franc zone, as described above.

Macron spoke frankly about colonialism in a December 2019 visit to Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. He acknowledged that France is seen as perpetuating a "hegemonic view and the trappings of colonialism, [which are] a grave mistake—a fault of the Republic" (24). Macron has also promised to return African art and other historical and cultural items to their countries of origin (25). While Macron's rhetoric stands in contrast to that of prior French leaders, his actions also need to be considered. Widespread skepticism remains surrounding his intent to carry through with his proposed reforms. Furthermore, does Macron plan to stick to apologies and surface-level reforms, or does he truly plan to change the entire system? For example, are his proposed changes to the CFA franc zone enough to signify a true departure from *Françafrique*? Because Macron has only been president since May 2017, more time is needed to see if his words truly mark a change for the perspective of French officials concerning *Françafrique*.

There is a possible split concerning attitudes of 21st century French officials. The early 21st century attitudes, illustrated by Sarkozy, fit the ideological school. More recent attitudes, illustrated by Macron, do not readily fit with any of the hypotheses and might suggest yet another interpretation of *Françafrique* in the modern day. Again, more time is needed to assess the relationship between Macron's projected attitude and his actions.

Attitudes of Ivorian Officials

President Houphouët-Boigny was the Ivorian head of state during most of the *Françafrique* period, from 1960 to 1993. When discussing Ivorian officials' attitudes towards France and French involvement, it is worth reiterating that Houphouët-Boigny himself coined the neologism *France-Afrique* / *Françafrique* (2). His investment in the system is evident. He viewed the relationship positively, without criticism of French neocolonialism. Additionally, before Côte d'Ivoire gained independence, Houphouët-Boigny was a deputy in the French National Assembly (16). As a leader who was already connected to colonial elites, he epitomized "virtually all post-colonial leaders in former French colonies [who] remained loyal to their colonial bosses, decades after independence was achieved" (16). Houphouët-Boigny's participation in the elite networks

and the Françafrique system as a whole speaks to his positive attitude towards France and French involvement. The quote in the language policy section above also illustrates how he adopted a neocolonial position on issues like the use of local languages in education. Overall, Houphouët-Boigny was *the* Ivorian official during the Françafrique period, and his attitude was one of positive and active participation with France.

There have been two Ivorian presidents in the 21st century: Laurent Gbagbo and Alassane Ouattara. Gbagbo was president from 2000 to 2011, and Ouattara has been president since 2011. Gbagbo had a “systematic double politics” in his relationship with France: he kept a positive relationship and attitude towards France, but he permitted and arguably supported media and radical followers to propagate anti-French rhetoric, sometimes violently (2). Gbagbo used the Françafrique structure to secure his power, and he later manipulated that same system to grow a radical base of supporters that would back him in his attempt to hold on to power in 2010-11. Bovcon views this as evidence of France’s weakening hegemony, as leaders like Gbagbo can actively create such weaknesses in the system. In the end, as described in the defense pacts and military intervention section, Gbagbo was forced out of power. However, his actions mark a change in attitude, which notably resulted in the open radicalization and anti-neocolonialist attitude of his supporters.

Ouattara, on the other hand, seems to have a positive attitude towards France and current French involvement. As detailed earlier, Ouattara renewed Côte d’Ivoire’s defense pact with Sarkozy. Macron and Ouattara presented the new plan for the ECO currency at a joint press conference. During this announcement, Ouattara pointed out the need to move beyond the CFA franc zone, though he also supported keeping the new currency fixed to the euro (26). One recent and important aspect of Ouattara’s attitude was his announcement in January 2020 that he might run for a third term in October, which is unconstitutional (27). Arguably, because of Côte d’Ivoire’s special relationship with France, there was little international condemnation of this proposed, undemocratic behavior (27). There has not been a change in power in Côte d’Ivoire since the crisis of 2011, during which the French military supported Ouattara over the incumbent Gbagbo. If Ouattara does run for president again, and especially if he wins, it might symbolize a shift in attitude back to that of Houphouët-Boigny, who maintained the quintessential, close, mutually beneficial relationship with France throughout his long presidency.

When looking at 21st century Ivorian officials, Gbagbo’s presidency supports the regime theory hypothesis, but the implications of Ouattara’s presidency

are less clear. It perhaps still fits with the regime theory hypothesis. While Ouattara does support some declines in Françafrique such as ending the CFA franc zone, more time is needed for a full analysis of his attitude and leadership, especially considering a possible, unconstitutional, third term.

Conclusion

This analysis of Françafrique in the 21st century through the case of Côte d’Ivoire shows that while Françafrique might have declined ostensibly post 1990s, it is still robust and still an appropriate label to use when discussing Franco-Ivorian relations. While some implications, such as attitudes of French officials or the CFA franc zone, seem to have recently reoriented away from Françafrique, a pause is needed before speaking of any kind of collapse of Françafrique. While no implication studied here looks the same in the 21st century as it did from 1960 to the 1990s, each demonstrated some continuation of Françafrique, whether concrete or ideological. This is evidenced by the fact that each implication either supported the regime theory hypothesis (some concrete continuation) or the ideological hypothesis (some ideological continuation). Consequentially, while some level of overall decline is supported, it needs to be received with care. It would be dangerous to assume that a decline in Françafrique since the 1990s means that modern politicians and other actors need not worry about a neocolonialist system. Rather, the level of Françafrique’s concrete observable implications that still exist suggests that politicians and others need to continue acknowledging the system, as Macron has done, but then take the next step and commit to dismantling it completely.

The change in rhetoric that Macron represents makes the need to acknowledge and dissolve Françafrique arguably even more important. Pompidou, Sarkozy, and Houphouët-Boigny were clear about their commitment to neocolonial attitudes and policies. Because modern rhetoric is not always so blatant, it can be easy to forget about the continuation of Françafrique. Therefore, it is important to remember that present-day defense pacts, currency, language policy, and attitudes are carefully preserved remains of the French colonial system.

Future research could investigate whether these results are applicable to other, former French sub-Saharan colonies besides Côte d’Ivoire. Since Côte d’Ivoire was seen as the epitome of Françafrique from 1960 to the 1990s, perhaps Françafrique’s legacy is stronger in Côte d’Ivoire than in other, former sub-Saharan colonies.

Finally, future research should be done that focuses on African public opinion on the idea of a

modern Françafrique. Perhaps too much analysis starts with French perspectives. Is the moderate decline – but overall endurance – of Françafrique also perceived by the citizens who live under the defense pacts, language policies, and currency zones? The limits of this research would undoubtedly benefit from such an analysis.

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