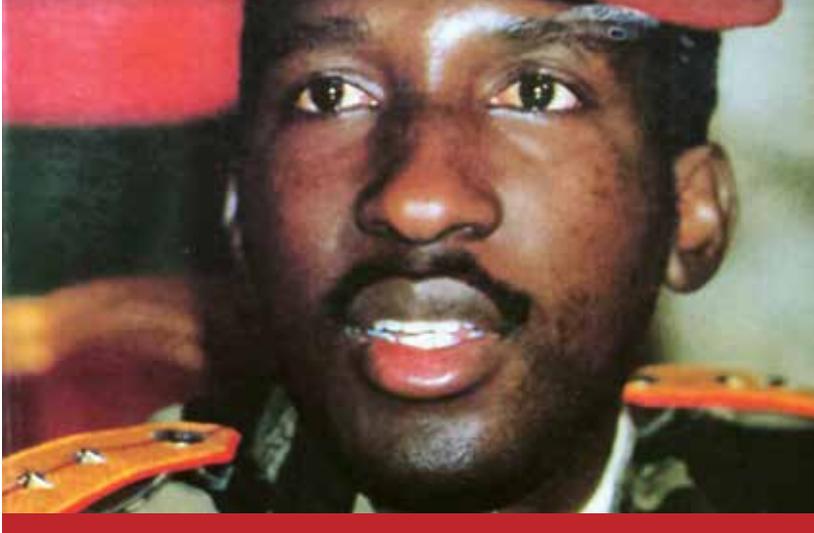


# Negritude Reincarnated and the Malcontents of African Solidarity



The relentless failure of Africa is premised on the thorough defeat of Pan-Africanism as a philosophy and ideology of political action.

By Ademola Araoye

The dominant narrative of the West in relation to Africa is that the West continues to reluctantly shoulder the White Man's Burden, tirelessly intervening to save Africans from their own endemic savagery.<sup>1</sup> This perceptual incongruence with reality is a logical derivative of a Conrad Joseph's notion of the magnanimity of Europe manifested as an emissary of pity, and science, and progress, and in its representation of the higher intelligence, wide sympathies, a singleness of purpose needed for the cause<sup>2</sup> the External Other in Africa has entrusted itself. This convenient false narrative flies in the face of actuality.

The stark fact is that western intervention, whatever rationalisations are adduced for the entrenched culture of ostensible, and actually quack, altruism in Africa, is a crushing bear hug in the interest of the West.

This is consistent with the fundamental assumptions directing the operational code of the West that every interaction, whether with friendly allies or adversarial foes, is predicated on the particular and unyielding articulation of the national will and the distillation of its parochial interests as state policy. The global order is founded on that understanding. Africa, characterised by a leadership notorious for conniving with its own traducers for petty little personal gains, has remained at the receiving end of this granite mentality of the West.

The current unedifying state of Africa, especially its seeming inability to forge a common will as a condition to articulate a truly strategic consensus on its holistic emancipation, may be traceable to this granite mindset. The West has also often been assisted by the feeble consciousness of Africa's

early presumed leaders, despite the often larger than life impressions of them fostered by cults in their little obscure enclaves of so called states. The pervasive character deficits of what in the long term perspective may be cited as African political conmen have impeded the construction of the structural foundations of holistic emancipation.

Overall, the relentless failure of Africa is premised on the thorough defeat of Pan-Africanism as a philosophy and ideology of political action and its associated drive for the consolidation of Africa's weaknesses into one major power with the capacity to effectively leverage its interests as a legitimate player on the global scene.

Instead, the ascendance of a dubious philosophy of Negritude that, while ostensibly seeking to rehabilitate the identity of the African and its descendants in the Diaspora, ultimately denigrated the essences and the autonomy of the African being. The disoriented fathers of Negritude, especially Aimé Césaire and Sédar Senghor, did not envisage independence from France. Rather, they sought to intertwine the destiny of Africa with its tormentors. Negritude, as the ideological plank that drove political action in key Francophone states in its simplistic interaction with the granite mindset of the West, underpinned the ruination of Africa.

It is acknowledged by the leaders of France in sober moments that without Africa, France would no longer be considered a world power. This was acknowledged in 2008, by French President Chirac. In a Defence review in October, 2012, the official French policy was unambiguously reiterated that France views Pan-Africanism as a threat to Western interests in Africa in general and French interests in Africa in particular. A good indicator is the uncomfortable reality for the 154 million citizens of Francophone Africa that five decades after independence, France still calls the economic shots.<sup>3</sup> To protect the status quo, Ilisha notes that French troops intervened militarily in Africa 19 times between 1962 and 1995. More desperate in recent years, given challenges to its hegemony around Africa, France has deployed

troops to protect its interests 35 times in the last 15 years, including recent invasions of Cote d'Ivoire, Libya, Mali and most recently, the Central African Republic. The interventions include:

- DR Congo (Zaire) - Helps Mobutu Sese Seko from attacks by Angolan-based nationalists in 1977 and 1978. France also mobilised to frustrate the African multi-national force that overthrew the Zairoise dinosaur.
- Central African Republic – Backs coup that ousts President Bokassa in 1979. Extra troops deployed to restore order after rebel takeover in 2013. France undermined the initiative of the sub region, led by South Africa, under the FOMAC coalition to protect a democratically elected President Francois Bozize.
- Chad - Intervenes on behalf of government in 1978, 1983 and 1986. Extra troops sent in 2008 after rebel advance.
- Rwanda - Colluded in the massacres in the country
- Ivory Coast - French force Licorne is deployed in 2002. In 2011, France helps Alassane Ouattara's rebel forces to over run the country and finally to capture President Laurent Gbagbo.
- Libya - Leads intervention to support rebels against Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. There are allegations that Muammar Gaddafi was shot and killed by a French agent.
- Mali - Forces Islamist militants out of northern cities in 2013.

These reflect the major tenets of Negritude propagated by people of African ancestry. This ideology has also been used to support unmitigated hegemonic control of Africa, the entrenchment of the CFA in Francophone West and Central Africa, the horrendous concept and praxis of FrancAfrique, and the ceaseless efforts of France to prevent the emergence of a truly autonomous and radically transformed Africa. In its Hobbesian orientation, war, as the ultimate currency of transactions, is permissible, if guile, as current sensibilities of international society encourage, fails to deliver the desired strategic outcome. Whether by war or by guile, the concept of a win/win resolution in the

prisoner's dilemma in a hierarchically structured global system is anathema to this realist foundational principle of international relations. Franklin D Roosevelt's injunction thus permits nations in time of grave danger to walk with the devil until you've crossed the bridge.<sup>4</sup> Strategic imperatives may thus impose association with questionable allies to achieve unquestionable objectives.

This assumes one fact, however. The concerned sovereign state space is a consolidated nation, with a monistic center of coherent policy projection, anchored in a clearly articulated *raison d'être*. A national *raison d'être* is a fundamental requirement in forging a consolidated national sense

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of identity, a sovereign will. What is not permissible for any people is the use of questionable allies to attain questionable objectives in the manner Africa, at all levels, has proceeded for half a century and more.

Negritude is a movement and an ideology<sup>5</sup>.

Policy, flowing from the philosophical planks of this ideology, was closely aligned with the interests of ascendant neo-colonial forces. This development was hinged on rationalisations implicit in what in a longitudinal time frame have proven to be dubious philosophical treatises that remain ascendant even today. Sédar Senghor's version of Negritude, his latter day version of the anti Pan-Africanist politics of his compatriot Blaise Diagne in the 1920s, ruined at a very early time the march to real post coloniality to be fostered in the

politics of holistic emancipation of Africa. Senghor engendered critical discontinuities that ultimately trashed the delicate fabric of the international black intellect. Negritude's new race consciousness, canvassed as rooted in a (re)discovery of the authentic self, sparked a collective condemnation of Western domination, anti-black racism, enslavement, and colonisation of black people. But Negritude, as enunciated by Senghor, posed a major challenge to the integrity of his tormented black soul.

Aimé Césaire's original concept of Negritude, as in the Pan-Africanist worldview, was anchored in the specificity and unity of black people. His vision of the unity of the black race and its common destiny was founded in and historically derived from the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the plight of black humanity in New World plantation systems. Césaire's response to the centuries-old alienation of blacks was a call to reject assimilation to enable the black race to reclaim their own racial heritage and qualities. He experiences his *négritude* as a fact, a revolt, and the acceptance of responsibility for the destiny of his race.<sup>6</sup> Césaire's first published work, *Conscience Raciale et Révolution Sociale* with the heading "Les Idées" and the rubric "Négreries", is notable for its disavowal of assimilation as a valid strategy for resistance and for its use of the word *nègre* as a positive term. The problem with assimilation was that one assimilated into a culture that considered African culture to be barbaric and unworthy of being seen as "civilized". The assimilation into this culture would have been seen as an implicit acceptance of this view.<sup>7</sup>

For Leon-Gotran Damas, Negritude is a categorical rejection of an assimilation that negated black spontaneity as well as a defense for his condition as black and Guyanese. For him, becoming French requires loss, repression, and rejection of self as well as adoption of a civilisation that robs indigenous cultures, values, and beliefs, of their value and essences. Damas' Negritude reaffirmed that inalienable centrality of his black heritage over convenient seemingly politically motivated responses to the

existential facts of life.

Senghor fought with the French in the Second World War and became a prisoner of war in then Nazi Germany. He became the Deputy for Senegal in the French Constituent Assembly, President of the Council of the Republic and Counselling Minister at the office of the President of the French Community. In 1960, he became the President of the Federal Republic of Mali and later in the same year, the President of an Independent Republic of Senegal. He was president until 1980.<sup>8</sup> He died in France to which he returned after a twenty year tenure as President of Senegal. His life was so intertwined with the French and the ups and downs of that country that his post-independence policies, both domestic and foreign, were mobilised on a practical and spiritual nexus he perceived between his blackness and French civilisation. This provided the basis of tenuous legitimacy for a very narrowly shared strategic consensus within francophone Africa. This unfortunate Francocentric consensus remains potent and has impeded the evolution of a distilled African continental will across the socio-economic political space of 56 (mostly unviable) state entities.

The Negritude of Senghor, as distinct from the postulations of Aimé Césaire and Leon-Gotran Damas, has historically been problematic for its debilitating implications for Africa across the wide spectrum of socio-economic and political realms. While the troika promoted a quest for authentic African beliefs, values, institutions, and civilisations, unlike his two peers, who strongly opposed assimilation of blacks into France's imperialist cauldron, Senghor peculiarly advocated assimilation of the African in a manner that allows association, "a cultural métissage" of blackness and whiteness.

His theory of black humanism advances notions of a distinct Negro soul, that is characterised by intuition, irrationalism, and crossbreeding to rehabilitate Africa. His appeal for reconciliation and God's forgiveness for France's dehumanisation of blacks through enslavement and colonisation are not followed by logical repudiations

of the continued vassalisation of the essences of his African soul. He, in a catastrophic lapse in a momentous historic moment, envisioned Western reason and the irrational Negro soul as instruments of research to create a Civilisation of the Universal, a Civilisation of Unity by Symbiosis.<sup>9</sup>

Neither Césaire nor Senghor in Senegal envisaged political independence from France. Negritude would, according to Senghor, enable Blacks in French lands to have a "seat at the give and take [French] table as equals". These sad self-negating reflections of a young disoriented African in Paris rightly met with outright dismissal within the critical African intelligentsia in the Diaspora. Dismissing the whole concept of Negritude, Frantz Fanon, revolutionary theoretician, psychiatrist, and former

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student of Césaire's, considered the concept as too simplistic. In his 1952 book *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon aptly denounced the Senghorian notion of black soul as nothing but a white artifact. The centre of gravitas in Senghor's world was France. It seems that he recklessly courted personal validation from the French establishment. His political praxis gravitated around France. His life and worlds were not dedicated to Afrocentric causes. He died in France.

In advancing his embedded propositions, including physical hybridisation of the French and blacks, paradoxically to advance claims of projecting the African soul for rehabilitation, Senghor follows the steps of his compatriot Blaise Diagne, who rejected Pan-Africanism in favour

of assimilation of blacks into the French civilisation. To be sure assimilation was the process of scouring and sanitising blacks of their perceived dark heritage, rebirthing a select few, and then integrating them through an immersion into French culture.

A first condition of assimilation is to self-repudiate. But still, some experts attempt to root Negritude in Pan-African congresses. The concept of liberation and freedom in Pan-Africanism and Negritude do not converge. The records are also clear that there were dissenting voices of white masks at the 1921 Second Pan-African Congress that met in several sessions in London, Paris and Brussels. Blaise Diagne and Gratien Candace denounced Pan-Africanism at that conference. The two were French politicians of African and Guadeloupian descent, who represented Senegal and Guadeloupe in the French Chamber of Deputies. The duo, presumably acting under the influence of the French establishment, soon publicly abandoned the idea of Pan-Africanism. Instead of the common destiny of black humanity, a core tenet of Pan-Africanism, Diagne and Candace, and much later, Sédar Senghor, advocated (a still elusive) equal rights inside French citizenship. They also thought that the Pan-African London Manifesto declaration was too dangerously extreme.

The French establishment, through the agency of a misguided and disoriented black elite, has thus been at work to frustrate any meaningful initiative over the centuries to unite Africa. Then, as now, Africa has been trapped in the bogus ideology of a self-repudiating philosophy in Negritude. In many instances the leadership of states and continental institutions, including the African Union, are no more than witting and unwitting proxies of France advancing treacherous notions of their common destiny with their masters. The intrusive engagement of France in the affairs of the continent, including the filling of strategic offices, is a given fact. And, in a peculiar abdication of sovereign prerogative, the management of the Francophone Africa's fiscal policies is consigned to France.

In a March, 2015 article, Simon Allison details the workings of the

CFA to the detriment of Francophone Africa. He was jailed for his effort by the Alassane Ouattara government in Côte d'Ivoire. Allison observes that in order to shore up its declining power, and eager to tighten control over its former colonies, France contrived mechanisms to ensure its continuing control when it granted flag independence to its colonies in Africa during the wave of independence in the 1960s. The mechanism with the most devastating consequence was the CFA franc. He noted that what the CFA stands for has changed over time. Originally, it was the French colonies of Africa which implied French ownership. Now it is the African financial community or financial co-operation in Africa – more politically neutral phrases that mask the extent of French control.

The CFA franc, created in 1945, was projected as an idea to protect France's African colonies from a devaluation of the French franc. Post-colonial countries in the CFA zone were required to deposit most of their foreign currency reserves with the French Treasury. The French authorities however dictated monetary policy and determined when and how governments could access the money. The CFA was pegged to the French franc, with France alone able to determine the exchange rate. The arrangement remains much the same 70 years later.

Pierre Canac and Rogelio Garcia-Contreras explained in the *Journal of Asian and African Studies* in February 2011 four fundamental principles that guide France's relationship with the CFA countries. First, the French Treasury guarantees without limits the convertibility of the two CFA francs. Second, the two CFA francs are convertible at a fixed exchange into French francs (now euros). That fixed exchange rate can change, but only with French approval. Third, despite plenty of restrictions, there are no de jure controls on the movement of capital within the (CFA) zone. And fourth, the zone members must pool together a minimum of 65% of their international reserves, corresponding to 20% of the monetary base of each central bank, into an operations account at the French Treasury. This

last principle is perhaps the most controversial: by depositing such a hefty chunk of their foreign reserves into a French-managed account, participating countries effectively lose control over their monetary policy. CFA members cannot use these funds as collateral to obtain credit because the reserves are held in the name of France. With French representatives on the boards of both CFA central banks, they are almost entirely dependent on French approval to set their own interest rates, or to control the amount of money within their economies – a basic policy tool for governments.

Sanou Mbaye, a Senegalese development consultant and a former senior official at the African Development Bank, highlights that the currency ossifies CFA countries' economies and prevents them from pursuing policies that may be more

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successful at promoting inclusive growth. “The CFA franc arrangements keep the western African countries involved in the same economic shape as in colonial times. They provide raw materials to France and import all their manufactured goods. The convertibility of the CFA franc and its free transferability, combined with high interest and exchange rates, keep the franc zone countries in a state of structural deficits that render any development policies irrelevant,” concludes Mbaye.

Perhaps the CFA arrangement illustrates Senghor's characterisation of the black soul as irrational and intuitive rather than reasoning. Senghor seemingly validates Conrad Joseph's malarial induced psycho distortions of a discounted Africanity while implying as weak the authentic

claims to an autonomous and African civilisation(s) premised on an experiential logic of understandings of its unique environment before contact with and the imposition of the External Order. African culture and soul were to be rehabilitated through Senghor's peculiar physical hybridisation of the two races and metissage. Senghorian negritude is largely responsible for the compromised integrity and the dissipation of the authenticity of the distilled singular and autonomous will of Africa's peoples. The concept of the singular autonomous will of African peoples is represented in Pan-Africanism and its Afrocentric policy thrusts. Contrasting Negritude, the concept of Pan-Africanism rests on a plank of shared assumptions that flow from the shared commonality of the history of black humanity and the degradation of that shared humanity and the experiential narratives emanating from that history.

Consequently, Pan-Africanist intellectual, cultural, and political movements tend to view all Africans and descendants of Africans as belonging to a single "race" and sharing cultural unity. Pan-Africanism's sense of a shared historical fate for Africans in the Americas, West Indies, and, on the continent itself, has centered on the Atlantic trade in slaves, African slavery, and European imperialism. Given the horrendous experience of black humanity in the evolution of the global scheme of things, the logic of Pan-Africanism leads directly to the consolidation of the continental space into one national state space. Pan-Africanists have invariably fought against racial discrimination and for the political rights of Africans and descendants of Africans, have tended to be anti-imperialist, and often espoused a metaphorical or symbolic (if not literal) "return" to Africa.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, Negritude is the potent source and driver of Africa's sub-parity in the engagement with the external order. Rationalised as the preferred logical outcome through the integration of the will and essences of subjugated Africa with that of dominant France, Negritude constitutes a violent assault on the essential tenet of Pan-Africanism. The unchanging holy grail

of France's strategic policy in Africa is to ensure in perpetuity its fraudulent claims of special relationship with Africa. It is for this reason that France views Pan-Africanism as a threat to Western interests in Africa in general and French interests in Africa in particular.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, Africa is deficient in the requisites for a constructive and mutually beneficial engagement with the External Other and its prevailing External Order. Africa, scandalously rich with abundant untapped natural resources, is not a consolidated state space. It is trapped in a contrived and deleterious status quo characterised by fictive sovereignty, contingent nationalisms and en masse identity defection that are directly traceable to the impact of philosophies like Negritude. The true burden of the External Other in Africa, exemplified in the Democratic Republic of Congo, or Congo (Brazzaville), or Tchad or in Gabon, in Cote d'Ivoire, in Liberia or in Mali, Guinea, is how to sustain the Conradian enabling epistemology to legitimise the sustenance of a crippling environment favourable to contrived iron-clad dependence.

The end goal is subjugation to facilitate illicit and systematic hemorrhage of national and continental wealth to western capitals. Or better still, the continued rape of the continent. The end of the Cold War and the passage of many of France's African stooges in Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Central African Republic have proven challenging for France. Drawing lessons from policy failures and setbacks in what hitherto were considered entrenched French strongholds in post Houphouet Boigny Côte d'Ivoire and post Omar Bongo Gabon, France has re-jigged its security and foreign policy to strengthen its hegemonic control over its neo colonies. In Côte d'Ivoire, the death of Houphouet Boigny, the patron of French interests in West Africa, in December 1993, led to a crisis of French interests as a radical African nationalist, Laurent Koudou Gbagbo emerged as leader. This followed a succession of lacklustre French stooges including General Robert Guie and Konan Bedie, the permanently inebriated and indulgent godson and

political heir of the late Houphouet Boigny.

In my book *Côte d'Ivoire, the Conundrum of a Still Wretched of the Earth* (AWP, 2012) I show that the Ivorian conflict presented France with a major crisis of its continued political and economic control over Côte d'Ivoire in the post Houphouet-Boigny era. The crisis also posed a significant threat to its continued hegemony in West Africa. Or, in the hypothesis of Franck A Zagbayou, France presented Côte d'Ivoire with a crisis in order to consolidate its control over the country and, related to this, its continued hegemony of the West Africa sub-region.<sup>12</sup> I noted that the complex of relationships between the Francophone African states and France formed by far the most comprehensive

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set of mechanisms for maintaining control over African states and their rulers. It had no equivalent either among the other colonial powers or in the clientele networks established by the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>13</sup> The complex relationship also implies that France is deeply implicated in the evolution of the political process in these Francophone countries. This complexity has been manifest in France's role in the Ivorian conflict. France, a central, and increasingly an open player in the crisis, found itself overtly on the frontline of the Ivorian quagmire.<sup>14</sup> As such any understanding of the Ivorian conflict depends on an awareness of France's role.<sup>15</sup> For many key French policy hands on Africa, it is the only continent where France is

still first. Abandoning it is unthinkable. France needs Africa to persuade itself, and the rest of the world, that it counts for more than a once-imperial, now middle-ranking European power.<sup>16</sup> The Ivorian crisis therefore presented a critical test of France's continuing resolve to sustain its hegemony in Africa.

Meanwhile, to sustain Western hegemony in Africa, assassination of radical leaders has been a useful tool. On 15 October, 1987, Blaise Comptore, working in close collaboration with Houphouet Boigny, assassinated his mentor, brother, friend and comrade in arms, Thomas “Che” Sankara. Sankara, also known as the “Che of Black Africa”, was inspired by the Cuban revolution. He sought to adapt the principles of that revolution to the daunting socio-economic challenges in one of the poorest countries in the world. He disagreed with the panaceas promoted by the Bretton Woods institutions. For that he was eliminated.

The elimination of Sankara was only one strand of a complex long term strategic plan to put West Africa solidly in the pro-Western conservative mould, in this case to consolidate French hegemony. A decade earlier, on 13 February, 1976 Nigeria's radical national hero Murtala Mohammed was murdered and removed from the scene. Nigeria has yet to recover from the devastating impact of the truncation of the most revolutionary moment of its national history. This followed a pattern that entailed the ousting of Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana on 24 February, 1966. Before then Togo's President Sylvanus Epiphany Olympio was assassinated on 13 January 1963 for being too friendly with Anglophone West Africa and proposing to build a sea port in Lome. The plan to build a port in Lome ran counter to the decision of France to have only one port in Cotonou.

Sekou Touré was the luckiest of the early radicals. He survived a Portuguese invasion in 1970. Touré was an inflexible hardliner in the defence of the liberty and dignity of Africans from foreign domination. He also promoted Pan African vision including the ideal of African unity and collective self-reliance. Touré actively

supported (militarily and otherwise) national liberation movements on the continent, including in Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Angola, Mozambique, and South Africa. To undermine him, the Portuguese launched an attack on Conakry in 1970 ostensibly to rescue Portuguese Prisoners of War, but really to overthrow Touré's regime, and destroy PAIGC bases. They succeeded in assassinating Amilcar Cabral, a revolutionary nationalist and fecund revolutionary mind and practitioner. The Portuguese intelligence services succeeded in everything other than overthrowing Touré's regime. These were the heroes of Sankara. Sankara's killing was thus an element of a grand scheme that had unfolded long before he came onto the scene. The assassin Blaise Compaore was another common criminal in the hands of very visible forces determined to continue with the ruination of progressive Africa. Sankara's memory stands as a stout monument to the unquenchable flicker of hope of emancipation and the permanence of the integrity of a true revolutionary impulse that is possible even in Africa.

Sankara's immediate crime was a simple one. In a bilateral negotiation, he admonished France to respect the contributions of Burkinabes to the French economy even if all they did was clean the streets of France. By this challenge Sankara antagonised France's prefect and overseer of France's interests in the sub region, Houphouet Boigny in Abidjan. Boigny had to put this revolutionary gadfly in his France assigned prefecture in line. Compaore was the hangman. On 15 October, 1987, Compaore deployed murderous elements of the Charles Taylor led National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) that were hibernating in Ouagadougou to assassinate Sankara. The NPFL brutes had camped in Ouagadougou on returning from their training base in Libya and were awaiting the green light and the required military supplies from Houphouet Boigny in Abidjan to invade Liberia through Ivorian territory.

Meanwhile, France's implication in the evolution of the political process in the post Houphouet-Boigny Côte d'Ivoire era, which had been dominated

by the long crisis of succession that culminated in the Ivorian conflict, is consistent with the general axiom that Africa's relations with Europe since the sixteenth century have been defined by the constant interaction between the ambition of one against the reaction of the other.<sup>17</sup> In spite of changes of tectonic magnitude in the international system in the post-Cold War era as well as the demise of apartheid in South Africa that brought to an end the last bastion of direct and open domination of blacks on the continent, France's ambition to consolidate its control over Francophone Africa and to dominate Black Africa has been a recurring theme in its involvement in crisis situations on the continent.

The Rwandan ambassador to Paris, Jacques Bihozagara, highlights that French connivance in the 1994

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massacres in his country stemmed from concerns about its diminishing influence in Africa.<sup>18</sup> This ambition remains a major factor, if not the decisive one in the appreciation of France's role and its complicity in the Ivorian crisis. That role of France was set against a backdrop of apprehensions about the possible intentions of the United States to exploit the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire to undermine France's power in the sub-region in less than a decade after its seeming humiliation by the United States over the fate of Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire. In that episode, the United States' unusual direct engagement, in collaboration with Nelson Mandela's South Africa, was instrumental in finally neutralising and ousting Mobutu against the objection of France, which was

prepared to intervene militarily in the battle for Kinshasa to save the dictator. These fears were critical considerations in French policy objectives in the Ivorian conflict. France exploited to the fullest the legitimacy conferred on the deployment of its forces under the mandate of UN operations in that country. It seized the opportunity to strengthen its military presence in Côte d'Ivoire in readiness to use its military might to advance its real goals: to protect its concrete imperialist interests in Côte d'Ivoire,<sup>19</sup> and retain its status as the foremost power in black Africa.

To achieve these goals, France mobilised a Houphouetist domestic constituency in Côte d'Ivoire. It strengthened diplomatic relations with its old ally Blaise Compaore and provided Burkina Faso with weapons. It encouraged the traditional friends it had helped to sustain or return to power, including Omar Bongo of Gabon and Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of Congo, who had overthrown a democratically elected government and whose return to power through the force of arms was financed by the French company ELF, to join the peace process.<sup>20</sup> Through these moves, France was effectively represented at the sub-regional and continental fora where important decisions were being taken on the way forward. The involvement and close collaboration of the traditional friends of France in Africa, with their metropole in the Ivorian peace process, ensured that France would retain its control over the substantive direction of the Ivorian peace process.

Beyond the rhetoric of seeking a resolution to the conflict, the interests of Côte d'Ivoire were marginalised as many of the intervening actors equated a viable and sustainable resolution of the conflict with the protection of the interests of France and its friends such as Burkina Faso, who all sought to keep Côte d'Ivoire within the Francophone family and thus under French control. In this connection, the interests of France converged with those of Burkina Faso and Mali and, in general, with the CFA states of West Africa. Côte d'Ivoire contributes 40 percent of the total financial resources of that economic zone, and its continued effective

participation in the life of that bloc was critical for continuing of France's control of the sub-region. The continued existence of that bloc also facilitated the French goal of impeding or preventing the evolution of a truly sub-regional economic community across colonial and linguistic lines. These lines are given greater accentuation under the rule of French conservatives.

The hegemonic interests of France acquire particular salience in relations with its ex-colonies during the rule of the conservative right. As such, relations between the right wing government of France and its ex-colonies are often tense, as the in case of President Laurent Gbagbo, who had a good entente with the French Parti Socialiste government led by Lionel Jospin. The neocolonial policies of the French conservative right go to the heart of the crisis of French hegemony in Africa. Guy Laberty, an influential member of the French Parti Socialiste, observes that if France continues to have its Security Council veto, its foundations lie essentially in its colonial history. The ingratitude of the French right under President Jacques Chirac vis-à-vis its ex colonies would serve no purpose for the French people who are desirous of being in the partnership for the modernisation of Africa.

Laberty stresses that France's problems in Africa arose from its continued application of outmoded strategies to maintain its domination through support for dictatorial regimes without democratic openings. He observes that the majority of the presidents in Francophone Africa come from the military ranks that were instructed by French trainers in conservative ideas. With particular reference to the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, Laberty affirms that with the fall of the Berlin Wall, France lost its influence in Africa under pressure from the United States and with the emergence of new political forces in Africa. The new political forces were exemplified by the likes of Laurent Gbagbo in Côte d'Ivoire, who had taken risks for democracy and political pluralism. France, he highlighted, was completely at odds with this new generation of African leaders. As regards concrete steps to equilibrate relations with its ex

colonies, Guy Laberty highlights that France needed to undertake reform in a number of areas including in the monetary CFA arrangements at the quickest pace. Also, in the face of the play of open market forces, France wanted to preserve its empire based on the big monopolies of French enterprises. Further, bilateral defense agreements between France and its ex colonies had proven to be inefficient and in fact dangerous for Africans.

On the crisis in the Central African Republic, elsewhere I have adumbrated that the unremitting blood-letting in Central Africa along ethno-religious lines was not inevitable. Africa seemingly got it right in Central Africa in late 2012. It mobilised militarily to put in check the murderous Seleka to protect the presidency of the democratically elected Francois

**“France has gone back to the drawing board and established a new structure largely constituted by residents of France of African descent and a sprinkling of French youths.”**

Bozize. Supported by aspiring regional power South Africa, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) put together forces from Chad, Gabon, Cameroon, Angola, and the Republic of Congo to create a mainly African force: the FOMAC. But Africa miscalculated the intentions of France. President Francois Bozize had broken the golden rule of regime survival in any Francophone state in Africa by inviting and deploying South African forces to protect him. The leading force in the FOMAC, South Africa, has still to demonstrate in depth appreciation of the subtleties required if it is to achieve its political objectives to emerge as a strong continental power.

It is of course the avowed strategic interest of France to prevent the emergence of such a pivotal African

power on the continent. If in doubt, South Africa ought to have asked Nigeria about this. Yet another factor that impacted the humanitarian fiasco in the CAR was the mortal threat perceived in the West of China's economic expansionist programme in Africa. The massacre in Central African Republic resulted from the interaction of these factors.

Shorn of all rhetoric, the massacres in Central Africa expressed the catastrophic consequences of realpolitik in a fragile African state environment. The so-called “humanitarian” manoeuvres by principally France and its ally the USA, were just the tactical footwork of an amoral world leading states in pursuit of their larger strategic objectives. It is the essence of games that nations play to camouflage the horrible reality of struggle for strategic ascendancy. In this, both Francois Bozize, the deposed President of the Central African Republic, who had the sympathy of African states, and the leader of the coalition of butcher organisations under the umbrella of the Seleka are mere inconsequential pawns in this tragic history of another African Francophone state.

President Francois Bozize broke all the golden rules. It is trite to assert that the first law of regime survival in Francophone Africa is not to threaten the interests of the creators of the state. As Bozize went ahead to extend a 2007 military cooperation agreement with South Africa, he was committing one of the two cardinal sins that have brought a horrific dimension to the long history of instability in the Central African Republic. The Department of Defence of the Republic of South Africa on 6 January 2013 reissued a public statement confirming that an agreement between the Government of the Central African Republic and the Government of the Republic of South Africa concerning Defence cooperation signed in Pretoria on 11 February 2007 had been extended for another five years. The Memorandum of understanding in its preamble expresses the willingness of both parties to acknowledge and demonstrate their mutual commitment to the formation and development of their defence relationships. The public reissue

of the Agreement which promotes co-operation between the Parties on peace and stability and the training and capacity building of military personnel through the exchange of trainees, instructors and observers had become necessary as President Zuma was contemplating the deployment of 400 men to bolster its special forces that were protecting the Central African President and also strengthen the FOMAC in Bangui. This reinforcement was important as appeals made to the international community to shore up a distressed democratically elected president went unheeded. Despite the notoriety of the advancing Seleka, France, waiting in the wings to rub the nose of the South Africans in hot African pepper, conveniently stressed that the bloody rebellion in the CAR was an internal affair. It mischievously called for dialogue. The United States evacuated its mission. It went mum.

The 200 men eventually deployed by South Africa to help local troops could not contain the largely Muslim rampaging Seleka, who were said to have numbered over 3000 men and boys. As the Seleka took Bangui in March 2013, South Africa lost 13 men, the heaviest military loss of South African Defence Forces since the end of Apartheid. Overwhelmed by the rag tag Seleka militia, South Africa's rating as a credible bulwark against political adventurism took a nose dive. This was exactly where France wanted South Africa; to be perceived as an imposter in the French African exclusive pre-carre by the Elysee. South Africa had to learn that its good intentions are not enough. Half-hearted military deployments don't stop mad men on their trails. Nigeria, still yet to codify the losses in men for its altruistic Afrocentric political sentiments and its thankless interventions, learnt this in Sierra Leone and Liberia fighting the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). Leadership in these volatile political environments are very costly.

The enabled victory of the Seleka demonstrated the sheer recklessness of attempting to share the African Francophone social-economic political space between France and any

other force as was contemplated by Francois Bozize. In the course of subduing the countryside, according to Human Rights Watch documents, from February 11 to June 2, 2013, weeks after it had taken Bangui, Seleka gunmen in an orgy of violence killed at least 40 civilians, and intentionally destroyed 34 villages or towns. About this same time, the International Criminal Court (ICC), in collusion with France, indicted deposed President Francois Bozize for human rights violation. It was in this context that African states initially refused to recognise Djotodia as president. This set the stage in August 2013 for the deposed President Francois Bozizeto to make public his intentions to seek to regain power and see the rebels ousted. Accordingly, he announced the formation of the Front for the Return of Constitutional Order in the CAR. As the bloody scenario has unfolded, the emergence of the Christian anti-Balaka militants, a response to the immense brutality of the Seleka against unarmed Christian civilians, has had devastating consequences for the Muslim community. This has further polarised the crisis on ethno religious lines.

Michel Djotodia worked earnestly to earn a reprieve from the West in the hope that this would translate to silence of the ICC. The ICC has a record of shyness with villainous friends of the West. (Guillaume Soro and Allasane Ouattara of the rebel group Forces Nouvelles in Côte d'Ivoire come to mind.) Djotodia's first initiative was to pacify France and important western constituencies for the second sin of Francois Bozize. He began a review of contracts awarded to South African and Chinese companies under his defeated rival. This was to signal to Paris that he was prepared to reverse Bozize's ahistorical flirtations with dangerous notions of a diminution of France's stature in CAR by sharing defence and economic control with South Africa. In this Francois Bozize is in the same league with Laurent Gbagbo of Cote d'Ivoire – another victim of French influence at the ICC. Djotodia's final destination is expected to include the abrogation or a time lapse of the Defence Agreement with South Africa. The new strongman and

warlord's review of Chinese interests in the country was to send a strong signal to a panicky Europe and the United States over Chinese growing influence in Africa. Resurgent Chinese focus on the economy is a prelude to future serious political implications globally. Where else to begin than in the continent historically most acceptant of comprehensive foreign domination?

Against this backdrop, France's role in keeping its pre-carre under tight rein is a kind of service to its western allies who every so often signal their cynicism over the wide gap between France's rhetoric as a "friend" of Africa and its practical interventions that are clearly driven by its fear of a loss of international stature and being supplanted by a truly independent and autonomous Africa in control of its destiny. It is in this context that the blunt public denial of the claims of French European Affairs Minister Thierry Repentine that Germany and Britain were considering sending troops to the Central African Republic by German foreign ministry spokesman Martin Schafer must be seen. It was expected that then French President Francois Hollande was going to appeal to other European nations to bolster a self-serving French intervention tagged as a Peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic beyond logistical aid.

The role of the United States has been predictable. Beginning December, 2013, the Obama administration was committing to stabilise the CAR in response to a request. Obama directed Secretary Hagel to authorise US AFRICOM to help with the transportation of forces from Burundi to the CAR in coordination with France. The American President asserted that the US initiative was part of an international action to "avert" a humanitarian and human rights catastrophe in the Central African Republic. This is consistent with the arcane logic of international interventions.

As the tragedy has unfolded, South African society, x-raying the cost of its engagement in the CAR that is actually modest by ECOMOG standards, reminded the Zuma administration of its legal duty to enforce international human rights law by initiating the indictment of Djotodia through the

ICC. National Secretary Pikkie Greef observed that using child soldiers to conduct acts of war and aggression as was done by Djotodia's Seleka in the battle to take Bangui is a violation of human rights and an international act of criminality. South African Forces deployed in Bangui were more saddened by the discovery they made after the battle. Mostly traumatized, they found that they had indeed as individuals been victims themselves of the treachery of international politics. Most of the Seleka dead in the battle were kids.

"It was only after the firing had stopped that we (they) saw we had killed kids. It makes you sick. We (the South African troops) did not come here for this... to kill kids. They (the kids) were crying for help...calling for their mums" a paratrooper said to the *Sunday Times* of South Africa.

CAR was indeed crying for help and reprieve for the sins of Francois Bozize against France.

In Gabon, the undercurrents of the recent struggle for power between incumbent President Ali Bongo and Jean Ping was the dissatisfaction of French authorities with Ali Bongo's policy of giving preference to the interests of Gabonese people over the traditional open access of the French establishment to Gabonese national wealth. The French could not easily let go its biggest source of illicit money raising for politics and private use from Africa. In the integration of Francophone Africa with France as envisioned in the Negritude philosophy, what belongs to Africa belongs to France and what belongs to France stays in France.

The French establishment has taken to heart lessons that have emerged from the challenges to its hegemonic influence on the continent in the post-Cold War. The main take away from the crises is the decaying impulse of Negritude and the associated French political control of Africa as a result of generational change of leadership. France has gone back to the drawing board and established a new structure largely constituted by residents of France of African descent and a sprinkling of French youths. Their responsibility is to drive a new partnership between France and Africa.

The initiative was announced on 28 August to push what was described as a new phase of relations between Africa and France. The membership is a perfect demonstration of hybridisation of the destiny of French and Africans anticipated in Sédar Senghor's Negritude.

The establishment of a Presidential Council for Africa is highlighted as inscribed in the campaign of President Emmanuel Macron in relation to the renewal of the partnership between France and the African continent. It aims to give a new face to relations between Africa and France through its joint composition bringing together African and French personalities of France in civil society. Charged with bringing new clarity at the political level to the President of the Republic on Africa, the CPA brings together a dozen personalities from civil society. These persons were chosen for their

perceptions of France's policies in Africa, in particular the perceptions of African youth; and

- to develop linkages with African civil society and to take their concerns into consideration.

The new youthful black storm troopers on behalf of France hegemony in Africa include; Sarah Toumi, franco-tunisienne, 30 years, Karim Sy, franco-libano-malien, 49, Karim Nomaza Nongqunga Coupez, South African, 36, Vanessa Mounzar, franco-tchadienne, 33, Yvonne Mburu, Kenyan, 35, Jeremy Hajdenberg, French, 43, Liz Gomis, French, 36, Yves-Justice Djimi, French, 36, Diane Binder, French, 37, Jules-Armand Aniambossou, franco-béninois, 55, Jean-Marc Adjovi-Boco, franco-béninois, 54, Sarah Toumi, franco-tunisienne, 30.

The play master is busy while Africa snores. ■

“As envisioned in the Negritude philosophy, what belongs to Africa belongs to France and what belongs to France stays in France.”

investments in relations between Africa and France in the areas of entrepreneurship, health, sports and culture. French speaking though not necessarily originally from francophone Africa, they have demonstrated by their actions in favour of development in Africa their will to be engaged in a partnership of shared opportunities between France and Africa. The mandate of the CPA is:

- to bring clarity to the state of play in the relations between France and Africa;
- to formulate concrete actionable proposals in relevant areas relations between France and Africa such as entrepreneurship, sustainable development and education;
- to bring to the attention of the President of the Republic African

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