Cold War to Cold Peace: Explaining U.S.–French Competition in Francophone Africa

PETER J. SCHRAEDER

Three watershed events dramatically influenced the evolution of African international relations during the twentieth century. First, the extended global conflict of World War II (1935–1945) heralded the decline of Europe as the most powerful region of the world and the emergence of African nationalist movements intent on achieving independence from colonial rule. The outbreak and intensification of the cold war (1947–1989) subsequently transformed the newly independent African countries into proxy battlefields between the United States and the former Soviet Union, the two unparalleled superpowers of the post-World War II era. African conflicts often having little, if anything, to do with the ideological concerns of communism or capitalism threatened to become East-West flashpoints in the face of U.S.–Soviet involvement. The third watershed event—the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989—signaled the end of the cold war but not the end of international rivalry in Africa. As deftly noted by Jeffrey E. Garten, former under secretary of commerce for international trade in the Clinton administration, the ideologically-based cold war between the United States and the former Soviet Union has been replaced by a cold peace in which the Great Powers struggle for economic supremacy in the highly competitive economic environment of the new millennium.1 This article explores the origins and evolution of this cold peace by focusing on rising


PETER J. SCHRAEDER is associate professor of political science at Loyola University Chicago. He has just published African Politics and Society: A Mosaic in Transformation and is editor of the forthcoming Making the World Safe for Democracy? The International Dimension of Democracy Promotion.
U.S.–French competition and tensions in francophone Africa—those former colonies and protectorates where French constitutes one of the national languages.

The case of francophone Africa is particularly illuminating for two reasons. First, as witnessed by extremely acrimonious exchanges between diplomats from the U.S. State Department and the French Ministry of Cooperation (which as of 1998 became part of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs), francophone Africa has emerged as the most publicly contested arena of Great Power competition on the African continent. Journalists have delighted in reporting on the tendency of French Minister of Foreign Affairs Hubert Védrine to refer to the United States as a *hyper-puissance* (hyper-power) that, "although lacking a worthy international opponent truly capable of challenging its power, remains incapable of implementing a viable Africa strategy—in essence conjuring up the much-acclaimed image in *Gulliver's Travels* of the giant Gulliver finding himself hamstrung by hundreds of ropes tied by six-inch Lilliputians." This less than flattering characterization (the classic, French-language terminology, of course, would be that of a *super-puissance* or superpower) is not only deliberate but captures the perception of French policy makers and analysts who are wary of America’s increasingly powerful and dominant role in the post-cold war era. Not surprisingly, the hyper-power reference has led to countercharges within the U.S. policy-making establishment that such statements in the extreme reflect the ill-founded paranoid beliefs of French policy makers who have found it difficult to accept changes in France’s special role in francophone Africa.

Not to be outdone, French diplomats in turn bristle at accusations of being paranoid about Washington’s true intentions, citing highly publicized diplomatic statements, such as that by former Secretary of State Warren Christopher in October 1996, which underscore that “the time has passed when Africa could be carved into spheres of influence, or when outside powers could view whole groups of states as their private domain”—a clear reference to France’s previously privileged role in francophone Africa. The net result of what one observer has referred to as the emergence of a highly public “duel” between Paris and Washington in francophone Africa is that source material, particularly media accounts of official government statements, is in great supply, offering decision-making insights usually unavailable until official documents are declassified decades later.

---

3 Ibid., 49.
The case study of francophone Africa is also fascinating in that Washington and Paris were caught off guard by rising tensions between their two countries. Policy makers and Africanists from both countries incorrectly assumed that the post-cold war era would yield equal if not greater levels of U.S.–French cooperation enjoyed during the cold war. But attempts by the Clinton and Chirac administrations to reduce multiplying U.S.–French tensions often have been stymied due to widespread misperceptions, especially among diplomatic personnel within the field, about the origins and motivations of each other’s policies. An important irony of these misperceptions, explains Dominique Moïsi, a specialist of French foreign policy, is that now, more than ever, U.S. and French diplomats must cooperate if the Great Powers are to be effective in aiding Africa’s resolution of a myriad of socioeconomic and political-military challenges that have intensified in the post-cold war era. In this regard, developments in francophone Africa merely represent the tip of the iceberg of U.S.–French tensions that have manifested themselves in other foreign policy realms, as witnessed by the media’s coverage of several public disputes: France’s now discarded bid to reenter NATO; the most effective means of dealing with the recalcitrant Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein (France has called for diplomatic engagement whereas Washington favors military containment); Washington’s threats amid strident French government opposition to sanction French companies that do business with the “terrorist” regimes of Iran and Cuba; and a growing trade dispute over French refusals to import genetically-altered American beef and agricultural products that ultimately resulted in the much-publicized demonstrations in southwestern France against the McDonald’s food chain, which is one of the most prominent symbols in many French minds of everything that is culturally wrong with the United States and gradually destroying French culture. An important theme of this article is that understanding the origins of misperceptions and subsequent diplomatic tensions in francophone Africa should contribute to the more effective handling of the U.S.–French diplomatic relationship as a whole.

The remainder of this article is divided into five sections. After briefly describing the emergence and consolidation (1947-1989) of a complementary cold war regime in francophone Africa in which U.S.–French relations tended to be balanced, cooperative, and predictable, the remainder of this article explores the emergence of rising U.S.–French tensions during the cold peace in the economic, political, and security realms. A final section offers concluding remarks and implications for the future.

---


American and French foreign policies toward francophone Africa were driven by different sets of motivating factors during the cold war. American policy makers were principally guided by the ideological interest of containing the former Soviet Union and its communist allies. A variety of presidential doctrines, beginning with the Truman Doctrine in 1947 and culminating in the Reagan Doctrine of the 1980s, declared Washington’s right to intervene against communist advances throughout the world, including in francophone Africa. As a result, pro-West administrations, such as Senegal under Abdou Diouf, were treated as potential American allies deserving of foreign aid, whereas African Marxist states, such as Madagascar under Didier Ratsiraka, were isolated. In sharp contrast, French policy makers sought first and foremost to consolidate and promote the *rayonnement* (spread) of the most notable aspects of French culture, including the French language and intellectual traditions. Also referred to as the promotion of *la francophonie* (a greater French-speaking community), this policy is best represented by the biennial Franco-African summit attended by the leaders of France and francophone Africa, the most recent of which was held at the Louvre Museum in Paris in 1998. Economic interests were perceived by French policy makers as both parallel and integral to the promotion of French culture, as witnessed by the organization of thirteen former French colonies and Equatorial Guinea into the “franc zone,” a supranational financial system in which France serves as the central bank and provides a common currency, the Communauté Financière Africaine (CFA) franc, is tied to the French franc and guaranteed by the French treasury.

As long as the United States and France were pursuing fundamentally different but complementary foreign policy interests—ideology for the United States and culture and economics for France—francophone Africa remained the beneficiary of a complementary cold war regime in which U.S.–French relations tended to be balanced, cooperative, and predictable. Regardless of whether France was led by the conservative partisans of Charles de Gaulle or the socialists of François Mitterrand, French policy makers predictably claimed that historical links and geographical proximity justified placing francophone Africa within France’s sphere of influence. The implicit assumption of what is referred to as the French version of the Monroe Doctrine is that francophone Africa constituted France’s *chassee gardée* (private hunting ground) and there-

---

fore remained off limits to other great powers, regardless of whether they were “friends,” such as the United States and the other northern industrialized democracies, or “enemies,” such as the former Soviet Union and other “radical” powers. As demonstrated in the memoirs of George Ball, undersecretary of state in the Kennedy administration, this conception of francophone Africa was strongly endorsed throughout the cold war by American policy makers who recognized Africa as a “special European responsibility,” just as European nations were expected to recognize “our [U.S.] responsibility in Latin America.” Indeed, American policy makers perceived France as the only European power with both the long-term political will and the requisite military force capable of thwarting communist powers from exploiting instability, prompting some analysts to refer to France as Washington’s de facto gendarme (policeman) in francophone Africa.

This complementary cold war regime did not mean that competition and even conflict would not surface in French-American relations, but rather that such conflict would remain at acceptable levels and very rarely surface in public. Especially during the early years of African independence, there existed an undercurrent of argument among American policy makers that the United States should provide francophone Africa with an alternative to complete alignment with France, though not one really intended to remove the shield that kept much of the region separated from the socialist bloc. The United States, for example, to a degree that irritated the French, provided some aid and succor to Guinea when the regime of Sékou Touré was cut off from France. Divergences also appeared over the African-Marxist orientation of several francophone countries, most notably Benin, Congo-Brazzaville, and Madagascar, which France viewed more indulgently than the United States. The most noteworthy case of French-American tensions was the U.S. intervention in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Congo-Kinshasa; formerly Zaire). It is aptly documented in the memoirs of Jacques Foccart, the architect of French-African relations under the de Gaulle and Georges Pompidou administrations, who explained that French policy makers often privately equated the potential U.S. threat to francophone Africa with that posed by the former Soviet Union; in the extreme, they depicted the United States as the primary long-term threat to French interests. According to Foccart, Washington’s successful efforts in 1965 to place in power the pro-United States Mobutu Sese

Seko facilitated the penetration of “Anglo-Saxon influence” into the largest country of francophone Africa, and therefore constituted a clear “victory” for the United States at the expense of French interests. Despite general French misgivings over America’s true intentions in francophone Africa, Washington’s explicit, publicly-stated acceptance of France’s chasse gardée nonetheless ensured that Congo-Kinshasa and other, more minor cases constituted exceptions within a complementary cold war regime in which U.S.–French tensions remained at manageable levels and rarely surfaced in public.

American and French policies toward francophone Africa were also complementary in terms of what has been referred to as their “creative ambiguity” concerning the normative goal of promoting democracy. In the case of France, French policy makers sought to spread French culture with the same ideological fervor with which American policy makers sought to prevent the spread of communism. Consequently, when francophone countries tried to renounce their special relationship with France, as Guinea did in 1958 when it voted against the creation of a revised French community of states, French retribution was swift: all aid to Guinea was abruptly cut off by an angry de Gaulle. But as long as these countries maintained strong support for la francophonie and close ties with France, even authoritarian leaders were unlikely to find themselves under heavy pressure from Paris to democratize. For example, when asked why France did not militarily intervene when David Dacko, the democratically elected president of the Central African Republic, was overthrown in a military coup d’état in 1966, Foccart replied that the new leader, Jean-Bedel Bokassa, “after all was a very pro-French military man.” Similar contradictions were evident in Washington’s often-stated preference for democracy in Africa and perceived national security interests. Whenever the ideal of democracy clashed with the national security objective of containing communism, containment often prevailed at the expense of democracy. For this reason both Democratic and Republican administrations were willing to downplay the internal shortcomings of a variety of U.S. allies, such as Ethiopia’s Haile Selassie, Somalia’s Siad Barre, Congo-Kinshasa’s Mobutu Sese Seko, and a host of Africaner regimes in South Africa in favor of their strong support for U.S. anticomunist policies.

Neither France nor the United States, however, pursued monolithic Africa policies during the cold war era that could be characterized by a rigid centralization or uniformity. The historic lack of interest in Africa at the White House level typically ensured the de facto delegation during noncrisis periods of policy formulation and implementation to the bureaucracies of the executive branch and disparate portions of Congress. This typically led to the existence of numerous, often contradictory Africa policies.23 In France, where the African continent enjoyed a much greater degree of importance among French presidents and Africa policies therefore presumably enjoyed a greater degree of coordination, a wide variety of actors, most notably Foccart’s Cellule Africaine (Africa Unit) within the Élysée, the Ministry of Cooperation, the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs competed for foreign-policy influence.24 Francophone Africa’s special place in French foreign policy-making circles nonetheless ensured that policies toward this region would enjoy a high level of presidential attention and coordination to be envied by other regional specialists within the French foreign policy-making establishment and their Africanist counterparts within the U.S. government. The simple reason for such high-level interest was that France’s privileged role in francophone Africa essentially ensured its continued claim to great-power status.

**Emergence of Economic Competition during the Cold Peace**

The fall of the Berlin Wall marked the beginning of the end of the complementary cold war regime and its gradual replacement with a new competitive international environment in which French and American policies increasingly are being driven by the same factor: economic self-interest. The African economic stakes of this post-cold war economic competition are substantial. The slow, secular decline over time in the economic importance of Africa to the French economy has not mitigated the fact that this region (France’s second largest market after Europe) in 1998 absorbed $15.9 billion of French exports, accounting for 40 percent of France’s trade surplus.25 The continuing importance of francophone Africa in French economic calculations is demonstrated by the fact that the franc zone countries of West and Central Africa (including the Comoros) absorb nearly 50 percent of all French exports to Africa ($7.5 billion).26 The economic stakes are also important for the United States, despite

26 Ibid.
some initial post-cold war analyses that emphasized the lack of U.S. economic interests in Africa. As argued by Susan E. Rice, Clinton’s assistant secretary of state for African affairs, in the State Department’s budget request to Congress for fiscal year 2000, U.S. exports to Africa have grown significantly since the cold war’s end to $6.2 billion in 1997. This exceeds U.S. exports to the countries of the former Soviet Union by 20 percent. U.S. direct investment, most notably in the petroleum and mining fields, totaled $7.1 billion during that same year, yielding a 22 percent return on investment. One of the cornerstones of the Clinton administration’s economic initiatives for Africa has been to increase America’s market share in Africa from 7 percent in 1997 to nearly 10 percent ($10 billion) in 2002, with an important portion of this increase expected to be achieved as a result of growing U.S. market influence in francophone Africa—the only truly protected African market of the cold war era.

A turning point occurred in the complementary cold war regime when the French foreign policy-making establishment had to come to grips with an intensifying economic crisis on the African continent at the end of the 1980s, which created rising pressures for change within the carefully crafted web of economic ties that bound the French economy to those of francophone Africa. With many of their clients on the verge of financial bankruptcy, French policy makers initially decided to undertake an economic bail-out that entailed massive increases in foreign aid. French aid increased from the already substantial level of $3.7 billion in 1980-1982 to $8.2 billion in 1990-1992—a nearly 120 percent increase during a ten-year period. Once it became clear that the short-term bail-outs were insufficient and that projected aid levels were beyond France’s fiscal capabilities, French policy makers took the extraordinary step in January 1994 of devaluing the CFA franc by 50 percent. The decision not surprisingly sent shock waves throughout francophone Africa, which had never before suffered a devaluation; it clearly signaled that France’s commitment to the cultural imperative of la francophonie no longer took precedence over the pursuit of economic self-interest in an increasingly competitive, post-cold war world.

The growing importance of economic factors in French foreign policy toward Africa coincided with France’s determination to strengthen and expand its influence beyond la francophonie. This trend was nicely captured by the 1996 Franco-African summit held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, which signaled a shift in France’s relationships with both francophone and nonfrancophone Africa. The summit was attended by a record forty-five countries, including twenty-six heads-of-state, in essence functioning as a surrogate Organization

---

27 For example, see Clough, Free at Last?
29 Ibid., 2-3.
30 Ibid., 3.
of African Unity (OAU). Attendees represented all the colonial heritages of the African continent, signaling the broadening of the Franco-African summit beyond its original francophone organizers, whose first official meeting was held in 1973 in Paris. The Chirac administration was especially pleased with the first-time attendance of Nigeria, which was represented by General Sani Abacha. The broadening scope of the Franco-African summit reflects what could be characterized as the Chirac administration's triple strategy of enhancing links with the three major anglophone powers of Africa: Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya. In each case, French foreign policy is primarily driven by the pursuit of the economic self-interests of trade and investment. French policy makers also downplay the importance of human rights issues, as demonstrated by France's close relationship with the authoritarian Kenyan regime of Daniel arap Moi. Precisely because of its neomercantilist conception of bilateral relations within the anglophone world, France finally established close ties with the authoritarian military government of Nigeria prior to its democratic transition in 1999. This development only became possible after the death in December 1993 of Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the former president of the Côte d'Ivoire, who viewed Nigeria as a regional threat. France intends to be a player in such promising spots as South Africa, even if this means ceding a certain degree of competitive advantage in francophone Africa.

In the United States, the end of the cold war fostered the decline of ideologically-based policies in favor of the pursuit of trade and investment. The cornerstone of this new approach was the Clinton administration’s aggressive pursuit of winning trade and investment market shares for U.S. companies in all regions of the world, while simultaneously deemphasizing the role of foreign aid as the privileged economic tool of foreign policy.

In the case of Africa, the Clinton administration’s new foreign policy theme of “trade not aid” initially constituted more of a default policy than one driven by the calculated pursuit of economic self-interest. In a political system in which aid in general is increasingly subject to criticism and regions of greater perceived interest, most notably the Middle East and the former Soviet bloc countries of Russia and Eastern Europe, receive the lion’s share of a declining foreign aid budget, it should come as no surprise that U.S. aid to Africa, which had started on a downward trend during the Reagan and Bush administrations, continued to decline under the Clinton administration. Africa as a whole received $7.3 billion in U.S. aid during the three-year period of 1983–1985, but

---

this figure declined to $5.6 billion in 1989–1991 and $4.4 billion in 1992–1994. The figures for francophone Africa are particularly striking. They peaked at $1.9 billion for the three-year period of 1989–1991, but they declined to nearly $1.2 billion in 1992–1994. The Clinton administration nonetheless unveiled in 1996 America’s first formal trade policy for aggressively pursuing new markets throughout Africa, including francophone areas, suggesting the beginning of a more pro-active trade policy to match those already in place for other regions of the world.35

The launching of the Clinton administration’s long-awaited trade policy, which included the creation of an interagency Africa Trade and Development Coordinating Group jointly chaired by the National Economic Council (NEC) and the National Security Council (NSC), represented a significant departure from the cold war tendency to defer to European economic interests in their former colonies. This policy was preceded by the launching in 1992 of a series of highly publicized speeches rejecting Washington’s past support for France’s privileged role in francophone Africa in favor of a more aggressive approach to promoting U.S. trade and investment. “The African market is open to everyone,” explained former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Herman Cohen in a 1995 speech in Libreville, Gabon, explicitly designed to denounce the concept of a chasse gardée. “We must accept free and fair competition, equality between all actors.”36 The Africa Growth and Opportunity Act, envisioned to stimulate U.S. investment and trade, continues to serve as an important component of this economic strategy. A revised version of this act passed both the House and the Senate, although powerful domestic criticism, most notably within the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) and the largely southern-based U.S. textile industry, still questions the degree to which this legislation will be actively applied to the African continent. American officials nonetheless increasingly agree that foreign policy should serve as the facilitator of U.S. private enterprise in all regions of the world, including francophone Africa.

This more aggressive business policy is especially highlighted by the Clinton administration’s willingness to participate in a variety of high-profile regional events, such as the African/African-American Summit. Originally conceived by the Reverend Leon Sullivan as a vehicle for strengthening cultural ties between African Americans and Africans, the summit has evolved into a burgeoning forum for encouraging trade and investment between the United States and Africa. The inaugural summit was held in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire (1991); followed by summits in Libreville, Gabon (1993); Dakar, Senegal (1995); Harare, Zimbabwe (1997); and Accra, Ghana (1999). The most recent meetings have attracted more than three thousand participants, including increasing numbers

of African heads-of-state and notable African-American politicians, such as two-time presidential candidate Reverend Jesse Jackson and Coretta Scott King. The official U.S. trade and investment exhibition at the summit has also dramatically expanded since initial and limited U.S. government involvement in the first summit; and more recently it has been dedicated to the memory of Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown, who took initiative in building U.S–African relations before he died in a plane crash in Bosnia in 1995.

An important theme of this article is that it is precisely due to these ongoing changes in the foreign policy regime of the cold war era that we are witnessing the rise of U.S–French competition and conflict in francophone Africa. Specifically, the decline of complementary yet different foreign policy interests in favor of the common driving force of economic interest has ensured rising conflict in a variety of economic sectors. In the eyes of French policy makers, the penetration of American and other Western companies constitutes “at best an intrusion” and “at worst an aggression” into France’s chasse gardée. The seriousness with which this issue is treated at the highest levels of the French policymaking establishment was demonstrated at the beginning of the 1990s by the public admission of Minister of Cooperation Michel Roussin that a series of meetings had been held on how best to “defend” French interests, including those within the economic realm, against those of the United States.37

Intense competition between the government of the Congo-Brazzaville, Elf-Aquitaine (the French oil corporation), and Occidental Petroleum Corporation (Oxy), a U.S.–based oil company, serves as an excellent example of the potential future stakes involved in rising U.S–French economic competition.38 Desperately in need of nearly $200 million to pay government salaries prior to the holding of rapidly advancing legislative elections, newly elected President Pascal Lissouba “naturally turned for help to Elf-Aquitaine (which controls 80 percent of the country’s oil production).”39 When its French manager refused to approve either a $300 million loan or “a request for a $300 million mortgage on the future production of three promising new off-shore oil deposits,” Lissouba initiated secret negotiations with the U.S.–based Oxy. The net outcome was a signed agreement — ultimately renounced eight months later by the Lissouba administration due to “intense French pressure”—which resulted in a cash payment of $150 million in return for 75 million barrels of oil originally promised to Elf-Aquitaine.40 Not surprisingly, France in 1997 backed the anti-government forces of former President Denis Sassou Nguesso in a devastating four-month civil conflict that destroyed the capital and led to Nguesso’s emergence as the new leader of Congo-Brazzaville.

39 Ibid., 180.
40 Ibid., 181.
U.S.–French competition in the highly lucrative petroleum industry is not limited to Congo-Brazzaville. In the case of Benin, for example, the democratic alternation of power between the administration of Nicéphore Soglo (1991-1996) and Mathieu Kérékou (1996-present) coincided with rising U.S.–French competition over the right to explore for offshore oil reserves. The fact that President Kérékou emerged victorious in the 1996 elections with French assistance against the American-backed Soglo led some to assume that a French company (in this case, Elf-Aquitaine) would be favored over its primary American competitor (The Bettis Group from Dallas, Texas). The contract, however, was awarded to the American company. In Senegal, the administration of President Abdou Diouf in 1995 was able to withstand intense French pressures to maintain the preferential treatment awarded to French petroleum companies under his predecessor (President Léopold Sédar Senghor), subsequently signing a contract with a consortium of South African and American petroleum companies to exploit newly discovered oil fields off Senegal’s southwestern coast. The actions of both the Kérékou and Diouf administrations are not unique, but rather indicative of a more competitive foreign policy environment in which francophone African leaders are less reflexive to French foreign policy interests.

An important aspect of burgeoning U.S.–French competition is the willingness of local U.S. ambassadors to serve as advocates for business—in essence mirroring the activities of their local French counterparts and constituting a return to the pre-cold war era when U.S. diplomatic missions were more concerned with promoting economic linkages. A new breed of diplomat has increasingly made the promotion of U.S. trade and investment an important component of U.S. embassy activities in the host country. Numerous examples stand out: Ambassador Mark Johnson facilitated the spread of U.S. internet and related computer technology to Senegal; Ambassador William A. Dameron III successfully pushed for the strengthening of U.S. petroleum interests into Côte d’Ivoire; and Ambassador Hume A. Horan aided the growing involvement of U.S. mining interests in Mali. “In the past the U.S. government was not as willing to serve as an advocate for business, and as a result Americans were here in name only, at least as concerns trade and investment,” explained one private businessperson whose words captured the essence of America’s changing economic vision of the African continent. “This definitely has changed under the Clinton administration—they most notably aided us by

helping to keep the local playing field level from the often unfair economic practices of our competitors, and working with and facilitating our access to key government officials interested in what we could bring.”

This comment is indicative of a changing U.S. Foreign Service that has elevated the role of economics in the training and mandate given to its ambassadors in all regions of the world, including francophone Africa.

**IMPACT OF DEMOCRATIZATION DURING THE COLD PEACE**

The end of the cold war raised expectations that the Western democracies could make the promotion of democracy and human rights the cornerstones of a new international regime that would be consistently applied to all regions of the world, including francophone Africa. Scholars, activists, and policy makers in both the United States and France increasingly coalesced around the concept of making political democratization a precondition for the improvement of economic and political relations with Paris and Washington. However, the success of African democratic reform movements in seeking an end to single-party rule signaled the beginning of a process that threatened the essence of France’s carefully crafted francophone network: the potential replacement of staunchly pro-French, undemocratic elites with opposition candidates less enamored with France and more sympathetic to seeking closer ties with other northern industrialized democracies.

To the surprise of many, President François Mitterrand initially embraced these democratization movements in a much-quoted speech at the 1990 Franco-African Summit held in La Baule, France; he warned his counterparts in francophone Africa that future French aid would be contingent on their willingness to promote true democratic change. What became known as the La Baule Doctrine suggested that the promotion of democracy would become the new hallmark of French foreign policy. Bold rhetoric was obviated by the reality of ongoing foreign aid programs designed to keep pro-French elites in power. In the case of Cameroon, French aid to the authoritarian regime of President Paul Biya expanded from $159 million in 1990 to $436 million in 1992—the year of the country’s first multiparty presidential elections. The primary reason for the dramatic increase in French aid was to ensure Biya’s victory, especially as the most popular opposition candidate was John Fru Ndi, an

---

45 Author’s interview carried out in 1996 in Gaborone, Botswana, with Michael A. Weaver, manager of plant operations for Owens-Corning in Botswana.


anglophone politician perceived as a threat to French interests in Cameroon.\textsuperscript{48} Any misunderstandings generated by earlier French rhetoric were resolved at the 1992 Franco-African summit held in Libreville, Gabon. At this meeting, French Prime Minister Pierre Bérégovoy stated that when confronted with the potentially conflicting goals of promoting democracy, ensuring development, and maintaining security, francophone African leaders were expected to adopt the following order of priorities: above all, security, followed by development and, finally, democratization.\textsuperscript{49}

The election of Jacques Chirac as president of France in May 1995 coincided with an increasingly turbulent period in French foreign policy toward francophone Africa.\textsuperscript{50} The growing contradictions in French support for democratization were shown by the Chirac administration’s response to a 1996 coup d’état in Niger—the first against a democratically elected government in France’s former colonies since the beginning of the democratization process in 1990. (The first coup against a democratically elected francophone leader actually took place in the former Belgian colony of Burundi, where Pierre Buyoya assumed power in 1996.) Despite a 1995 commitment by Minister of Cooperation Jacques Godfrain that France would intervene to reinstate a democratically elected government if a defense treaty had been signed with that country, France refused to intervene in Niger and ultimately decided to work with the military regime headed by Colonel Ibrahim Maïnassara Baré.\textsuperscript{51} Not surprisingly, the democratically elected francophone neighbors of Niger were worried by French inaction. In a throwback to an earlier era of authoritarian rule and highly questionable democratic practices, Colonel Baré announced that there would be multiparty elections in 1996, presented himself as the candidate of the ruling party, and subsequently won the elections to the congratulatory toasts of local French diplomats.

U.S. diplomats on average have been more vocal than their French counterparts in their support for the democratization process throughout francophone Africa. This vocal stance is not due to a greater American commitment to promoting democracy in Africa. There is abundant evidence of ongoing contradictions between Washington’s pro-democracy rhetoric and concrete actions within the foreign policy realm. For example, punitive measures designed to enforce pro-democracy rhetoric are at best unevenly applied, depending on the perceived importance of the African country. The Clinton administration was quick to enforce comprehensive economic sanctions against the ministrature of Gambia when that country’s military took power in a coup in 1994, but it re-

\textsuperscript{49} Glaser and Smith, L’Afrique sans Africains.
fused to impose comprehensive economic sanctions against the military dictatorship of Nigeria that would have affected U.S. access to Nigerian oil, the mainstay of the Nigerian economy. The United States did impose a variety of more limited sanctions, such as the suspension of military cooperation.

The unusually vocal stances of American diplomats in francophone Africa are at least partially the result of a self-interested calculation that the United States has little to lose and everything to gain by excoriating pro-French elites who impede the transition to a new political order. The logic of diplomatic competition at the local level is based on perceptions of the democratization process as a zero-sum game—that is, one country’s gain is another’s loss. From the perspective of local U.S. ambassadors, for example, promoting multiparty democracy is a low-cost strategy with potentially high returns—namely, the replacement of pro-French elites with new leaders potentially more sensitive to U.S. interests. From the perspective of local French ambassadors, the reverse holds true, which explains why French policy makers often tend to emerge as protectors of the status quo. In the case of Benin, for example, President Nicéphore Soglo’s victory in the first presidential elections to be held after his country’s transition to democracy in 1991 led to the formation of an administration less dependent on France and more interested in promoting closer foreign policy ties with the United States.\(^52\) It is precisely for this reason, argue critics of French policies in Africa, that local French diplomats provided significant support to Soglo’s authoritarian predecessor, Mathieu Kérékou, who emerged victorious in the 1996 presidential elections. Although he ultimately accepted the 1996 election results, Soglo remained sharply critical of the “northern countries” (read “France”), who he at least partially blamed for his defeat at the hands of Benin’s former dictator of nineteen years. Regardless of France’s ultimate role in the 1996 presidential elections, however, Kérékou’s reemergence did not signal a return to the same Beninois-French relationship that existed prior to 1991. The strengthening of several competing institutional actors, most notably a vibrant national assembly, has contributed to growing pluralism in Beninois foreign policy.

Other cases highlight the importance of the alternation of power in potentially realigning the foreign policy relationships of francophone African countries. In Mali, Benin’s closest francophone African competitor for the most democratic country, the 1992 election of President Alpha Oumar Konaré witnessed the emergence to power of a new elite more sympathetic to restricting traditional ties with France in favor of the United States. When the newly elected French President Jacques Chirac requested that French West African leaders meet with him in Côte d’Ivoire and Senegal as part of his first presidential visit to the African continent in July 1995, Konaré refused to make the trip on the principle that Chirac’s itinerary implied an unacceptable hierarchy in

France’s relationships with French West African countries. In Senegal, Diouf’s accession to the presidency in 1981 was followed by the gradual relaxation and diversification of his predecessor’s staunchly pro-French foreign policy.\textsuperscript{53} Even in Côte d’Ivoire, as of January 2000 ruled by a military regime headed by General Robert Gueï, some observers predicted that the planned return to multiparty democracy could result in the election to the presidency of Allasane Ouattara, former deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This possibility initially caused some consternation in French foreign policy circles, not least of all due to the fact that France had de facto supported the authoritarian policies of the Henri Konan Bédié administration (1994–1999), including its declaration of the illegality of Ouattara’s quest to run as an opposition candidate in presidential elections. General Gueï, who increasingly appears to be setting the stage for his own presidential bid, has deliberately distanced himself from France while simultaneously questioning the fitness of several potential rivals, most notably Ouattara. The military coup carried out by General Gueï served as a poignant reminder that the process of regime change—regardless of whether carried out by the barrel of the gun or the ballot box—entails significant risks for France’s very carefully crafted francophone African network.

The very public war of words between the U.S. State Department and the French Ministry of Cooperation that peaked during fall 1996 served as a potent manifestation of this diplomatic competition. A turning point occurred when Minister of Cooperation Godfrain chided Secretary of State Warren Christopher for his decision to make his first (and last) official visit to Africa approximately four years after assuming office and literally weeks before the U.S. presidential elections of November 1996. Christopher responded to the perceived diplomatic slight by demanding an official apology. When none was forthcoming, he publicly criticized French policy: “All nations must cooperate, not compete, if we are going to make a positive difference in Africa’s future,” explained Christopher. “The time has passed when Africa could be carved into spheres of influence, or when outside powers could view whole groups of states as their private domain.”\textsuperscript{54} Not to be outdone, Godfrain responded in kind: “If I were a political or electoral counselor to President Bill Clinton, I would advise him to worry more about helping African development after the elections.”\textsuperscript{55}

The Christopher-Godfrain spat was not unique, but rather indicative of a growing political competition rooted in economic changes taking place in francophone Africa’s foreign economic relationships. French diplomats increasingly characterize the United States as a hyper-power that is either unwilling or unable (or both) to establish a coherent foreign strategy that matches words with deeds; this leads to American countercharges of French paranoia over los-

\textsuperscript{53} Schraeder, “Senegal’s Foreign Policy,” 1997.

\textsuperscript{54} French, “U.S. and French Sniping Heats Up Over Paris’s Links to Africa.”

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
ing their privileged position in francophone Africa. French policy makers were particularly critical of President Clinton’s presidential visit to the African continent in 1998 as typical of the rhetoric of a hyper-power that did not result in sufficient concrete measures in its aftermath. Especially in the case of Clinton’s apology in Rwanda for Western inaction about the unfolding of genocide in that country, French policy makers are quick to note that the Clinton administration’s opposition to a French-inspired military operation sealed the fate of thousands of Rwandan citizens. These critics argue that the Clinton administration’s attempts at controlling the policies of others (in this case, France) while at the same time failing to offer a viable alternative captured the essence of America’s new role as a hyper-power in the post-cold war era.56

DEBATES OVER CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND FOREIGN INTERVENTION

The emergence of new security challenges, such as the growing numbers of “collapsed states”57 beset by ethnic, religious, and political rivalries, has fostered renewed international debate over the desirability of foreign intervention in Africa and has contributed to rising U.S.–French tensions. The American response to these security challenges was sharply influenced by U.S. military intervention in Somalia under the auspices of Operation Restore Hope, most notably after eighteen U.S. soldiers were killed and seventy-eight others were wounded in October 1993 in a fierce battle in Mogadishu, Somalia.58 The Somali “debacle,” as it came to be known, served as the cornerstone of May 1994 Presidential Decision Directive 25 (PDD-25), which not only rejected any future American involvement in UN-sponsored peace-making operations designed to militarily impose peace among warring parties, but ensured an overly cautious approach to ethnically- and religiously-based conflicts in Africa. When confronted in 1994 with rising popular demands for U.S. intervention in Rwanda, for example, the Clinton administration, fearful of being drawn into another Somalia, not only initially blocked the dispatch of 5,500 troops requested by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, but instructed administration spokespersons to avoid labelling the unfolding ethnic conflict as “genocide,” lest such a label further inflame American public sympathy and demand American intervention as was the case in Somalia, or trigger American obligations under international treaties dealing with genocide and its prevention.59

The experience in Somalia also significantly affected the Clinton administration’s approach to conflict resolution, most notably by resolving a debate

56 Bourmaud, “The Clinton Administration and Africa: A View from Paris.”
between two currents of thought in the newly elected administration. The first emphasized the classic belief that African issues unnecessarily distract the administration and potentially plunge the White House into unwanted domestic political controversies. According to this viewpoint, American involvement, even in terms of conflict resolution, should be restricted to avoid entanglement in “future Somalias.” A second, more activist approach to conflict resolution was also derivative of the Somali experience but underscored that the massive costs associated with Operation Restore Hope could have been avoided by earlier preventive action. “The choice is not between intervening or not intervening,” explained one policy maker in the incoming Clinton administration. “It is between getting involved early and doing it at a cheaper cost, or being forced to intervene in a massive, more costly way later.” As witnessed by the Clinton administration’s cautious approach to the initial stages of the Rwandan conflict, the events of October 1993 in Somalia clearly strengthened the position of those warning against getting too closely involved in “intractable” conflicts in Africa.

In sharp contrast, France took the lead in undertaking a series of military interventions in Rwanda between 1990 and 1994. The Mitterrand administration’s decision to intervene was the manifestation of the long-term French goal of integrating the former Belgian colonies of the Great Lakes region into the French sphere of influence. Mitterrand’s military interventions also fostered one of the rare examples of popular outrage in France regarding policy toward francophone Africa, especially when it was learned that the Mitterrand administration had provided the authoritarian regime of Major General Juvenal Habyarimana with over $160 million in economic aid and an untold amount of military aid from 1990 to 1994, essentially contributing to the genocide that unfolded in 1994. An attempt on the part of the Élysée to rationalize military intervention in Rwanda as a humanitarian response to local suffering was dubious at best. In reality, the Mitterrand administration’s actions were aimed at stemming the invasion and steady advance begun in October 1990 by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a guerrilla army supported by Uganda and perceived by French policy makers as hostile to France and “under Anglo-Saxon influence.” From the perspective of several French policy makers, the RDF’s

---

61 Ibid.
military victory in 1994 constituted the first time that a francophone country had “fallen” to Anglo-Saxon influence. Some even perceived Rwanda as the beginning of a series of regional “dominos” that eventually could lead to Anglo-Saxon domination of portions of Central Africa to the “detriment” of France and la francophonie. According to this culturally inspired fear, often referred to as France’s Fashoda, Central Africa could become a Trojan horse projecting Anglo-Saxon influence throughout the remainder of francophone Africa.

The dilemmas associated with French military intervention were demonstrated by the Chirac administration’s response to the expansion of the regional crisis in the Great Lakes region, particularly the emergence and spread in 1997 of a guerrilla insurgency determined to overthrow the authoritarian regime of Mobutu Sese Seko. French policy makers perceived the Great Lakes crisis in francophone-anglophone terms: the guerrilla insurgency in eastern Congo-Kinshasa was led by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, who in turn was strongly supported by and allied with the Rwandan government of Paul Kagame and the Ugandan government of Yoweri Museveni. As a result, the French considered Kabila’s guerrilla movement to be under Anglo-Saxon influence and therefore hostile to France. The worst-case scenario envisioned by French policy makers occurred when Kabila’s guerrilla army overthrew the Mobutu regime in May 1997 and installed a new government (with Kabila as president) strongly allied with Rwanda and Uganda, which in turn are closely allied with the United States. According to this vision, Kabila’s emergence as the president of Zaire not only constituted a clear victory for Anglo-Saxon influence at the expense of la francophonie, but also raised the possibility that Congo-Kinshasa might serve as a potential springboard for the further spread of Anglo-Saxon influence throughout francophone Africa. This fear was dampened after Kabila had a political falling out with his former Rwandan and Ugandan allies, who subsequently launched a second guerrilla insurgency in 1998 designed to militarily overthrow the Kabila regime.

The Chirac administration’s attempts at playing a more proactive military role in the Great Lakes region were restrained by a variety of factors, including the lack of interest among the other Great Powers to authorize a UN-sponsored, multilateral military force; the publicly stated promise of the Rwandan government and Kabila’s guerrilla forces to militarily engage and inflict heavy casualties on French forces; and the French military’s limited capability to move independently and sustain the large numbers of troops and equipment that would have been necessary for a long-term engagement in such a vast military theater. France’s long-term military role in francophone Africa was most

68 See the December 1997 special issue of Politique Africaine (no. 68), “Politiques internationales dans la région des Grands Lacs.”
dramatically affected, however, by the decision to restructure and downsize the French military that followed in the aftermath of Lionel Jospin's election as prime minister in 1997 and the emergence of a new government of cohabitation under Chirac's conservative political forces (which control the presidency) and Jospin's Socialist party and allies (which were responsible for forming a new government). As part of this general reorganization, the decision was made to downsize the French military presence in francophone Africa and in such cases as the Central African Republic to eliminate French military bases completely. One notable outcome of this policy is that French army units will be rotated in and out of Africa on short assignments, ultimately decreasing the insularity of French officers who previously specialized in Africa, most notably within the French Foreign Legion.

The restructuring of French-African military relations is tied to a growing consensus over the long-term impracticality of direct French military intervention in Africa—a trend that is captured in ongoing debates within the French foreign policy-making establishment between the so-called anciens (the ancients), who favor activist measures (including direct military intervention) to maintain pro-French clients in power and the modernes (the moderns), who emphasize the need to move beyond France's interventionist past in its former colonies. At least as far back as February 1994, when the CFA franc was devalued, moves have been afoot to isolate the old-line defenders of France's chasse gardée in francophone Africa. No case demonstrated the rising influence of the moderns better than Chirac's rejection of the use of military force to return Henri Konan Bédié to power in Côte d'Ivoire—one of the linchpins of French foreign policy in francophone Africa—after his regime had been overthrown in a December 1999 military coup and replaced with a military regime led by General Gueï. The position of several ancients, most notably Michel Dupuch, presidential adviser for African affairs, for the need to consider using French troops to reinstate Bédié in power was successfully rejected by the moderns in Paris.

The irony of U.S.-French tensions over the Great Lakes region, particularly Congo-Kinshasa, was that the Clinton administration early on adopted a conservative policy approach that, similar to its predecessors, perceived Mobutu as both "part of the problem" and "part of the solution" to what was expected to become an increasingly violent political situation. At the heart of


71 Valérie Thorin, "Veni, vidi. . .," Jeune Afrique, hors-série no. 2 (January 2000).

the Clinton administration's conservative approach was the implicit acceptance of the "Mobutu or chaos" argument advanced by specialists in the State Department, the Pentagon, and the CIA since Mobutu took power in 1965.73 "Regardless of the fact that we are no longer faced with a communist threat," explained a foreign service officer (FSO) of the State Department, "the destabilization of Zaire [Congo-Kinshasa]—which borders nine other African countries—could have a tremendously negative impact on regional stability."74

With the experiences of Somalia and Rwanda still fresh in the minds of most policy makers, the Clinton administration sought to tread softly as, according to another FSO, the situation in Congo-Kinshasa "could easily turn into a Somalia and a Rwanda rolled into one, although this time in one of Africa's largest and most populous nations."75

Unlike their French counterparts, however, the Clinton administration during spring 1997 adopted a relatively benign approach that neither actively sought to remove nor openly sought to strengthen the Mobutu regime. Most important, the Clinton administration sought to ensure close ties with Kabila's senior political and military aides. For example, Dennis Hawkins, a political officer working at the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa, spent the months of April and May stationed at Kabila's guerrilla headquarters.76 In sharp contrast, the Chirac administration consistently provided the Mobutu regime with strong support that included covert military aid (complete with the hiring of Serbian, Belgian, and French mercenaries) designed to keep Mobutu in power.77 As Foccart underscores in his memoirs, French policy was driven by Congo-Kinshasa's status as the largest and most populous country in francophone Africa and therefore as a linchpin to the continued strengthening of la francophonie and other French geopolitical interests. Congo-Kinshasa "has the means to be a regional power," concluded Foccart, and therefore "the long-term interest of France and its allies is evident."78 As explained by Roland Marchal, a specialist of French foreign policy toward Africa, it is precisely for this reason that France "absurdly" supported Mobutu until the very end, in contrast to policies adopted by the other northern industrialized democracies. Subsequently France sought to strengthen ties with the Kabila regime, most notably in the aftermath of Kabila's falling out with his former Rwandan and Ugandan military patrons in 1998.79

The Clinton administration's hesitancy to become directly involved in African conflicts and the Chirac administration's recognition of the need to de-

---

74 Quoted in Schraeder, United States Foreign Policy Toward Africa, 107.
75 Ibid.
78 Foccart, Foccart Parle, vol. 1, 310.
79 Marchal, "La nouvelle politique Africaine," 3.
crease the French military presence in francophone Africa have led to military cooperation that stands in stark contrast to ongoing conflicts between the U.S. State Department and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The cornerstone of U.S.–French military cooperation, which also includes Great Britain, is the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI), a military aid program designed to train African armies in the art of peace-keeping and peace-making so that African countries can take the lead in resolving African conflicts. An earlier version of this initiative, the U.S.-promoted African Crisis Response Force (ACRF), was denounced by France as a unilateral measure that did not take into account French desires, as well as those of African countries that presumably would contribute troops. ACRI, however, has been based on the comparatively harmonious planning between the American, British, and French military establishments. Training is now going on, and there has been signal French-American cooperation in multinational military exercises like Guidimahka, which involved Senegalese, Malian, and Mauritanian troops, with French and American support units. While not without friction, this cooperation is based on the recognition of common French and American military interests, and the unwillingness (and/or inability) of both countries to commit major new public (especially military) resources to Africa.80

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS FOR AFRICAN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Three trends associated with the emergence of the cold peace in francophone Africa have significant implications for the future of African international relations. First, the transformation of U.S. and French foreign policy interests clearly suggests that the beginning of the new millennium will be marked by intense economic competition that harkens back to the Great Game of the nineteenth century. The Great Game, also referred to as the Victorian prologue to the cold war and the Tournament of Shadows, involved intense imperial rivalry for the mastery of Central Asia and ultimately all regions of the non-European world.81 As long as U.S. and French foreign policies were essentially driven by different foreign policy concerns—ideology for the U.S. and culture and economics for France—francophone Africa remained the chief beneficiary of a complementary cold war regime (1947–1989) in which U.S.–French relations tended to be balanced, cooperative, and predictable. In the cold peace aftermath of the cold war, however, U.S. and French policy makers increasingly find themselves at odds over their countries’ common pursuit of the same foreign policy concern: economic self-interest.

The intensification of Great Power competition for economic markets is neither limited to francophone Africa nor the U.S.–French dimension of Afri-

---

80 Martin, “France’s Africa Policy in Transition.”
81 See, for example, Karl E. Meyer and Shareen Blair Brysac, Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in Central Asia (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 1999).
can international relations. Japan and Germany have emerged at the beginning of the new millennium as two of the most important powers on the African continent after France and the United States. Especially in the case of Japan, a generous African foreign aid program ($1.1 billion) second only to that of France ensured more than $5.5 billion in Japanese exports and $4.7 billion in Japanese imports from African markets in 1996. A close partnership between government and big business (kanzai ittaishugi) in the pursuit of business diplomacy (minkan keizai gaiko) has served as an essential ingredient of Japan’s economic success. All Japanese government agencies, most notably the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), and the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), operate from the assumption that big business and diplomacy are both complementary and mutually reinforcing. As symbolized by the 1995 decision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to adopt a new logo—a red sphere for the Japanese rising sun and a blue sphere for the world, both of which are reaching out to each other—the Japanese foreign policy establishment is firmly committed to the extension of Japanese influence throughout the globe, including Africa.

Japan’s increasing economic role in francophone Africa, where it has replaced the United States as the second largest foreign aid donor after France, similar to the rising economic role of Germany, has not attracted the same degree of French criticism or antagonism directed against their American counterparts. This is perhaps due to the fact that Japan, like Germany, is not perceived as imposing upon French cultural institutions and leadership, as is the case with the U.S.-supported African/African-American summits. Another reason might be that Japan is not a competitor in the extremely lucrative and jealously guarded petroleum industry in francophone Africa. Japanese gains in the telecommunications and automobile industries in francophone Africa nonetheless have underscored Japan’s movement away from its past role as purchaser of primary products in favor of greater penetration of traditional French markets. Japan’s increasing financial success in francophone Africa has led some within the French policy-making establishment to criticize the rising economic influence and anglophone proclivities of what is sometimes referred to as America’s Asian protégé.

The process of democratization is a second important trend of the cold peace that has significantly affected African international relations. The inevitable result of free and fair elections in francophone Africa has been the rise to power of a new generation of elites less willing to accept the privileged pro-

---

French ties enjoyed and permitted by their predecessors. These same elites are often more inclined to take advantage of the highly competitive international environment of the cold peace to seek closer economic and political ties with the United States and other industrialized democracies. Precisely for this reason French policy makers view with suspicion Washington’s rhetoric in favor of democratization. The democratization process itself has unwittingly contributed to the intensification of U.S.–French conflict in francophone Africa.

Democratization is not the only process through which newly emergent elites have taken advantage of rising Great Power competition in Africa. A series of successful guerrilla insurgencies has fostered the rise of a new bloc of African leaders that includes Isaias Afwerki of Eritrea, Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, and Paul Kagame of Rwanda. Successful in their pursuit of power primarily because of their control over strong, disciplined, and battle-tested guerrilla armies, this new generation of elites shares a commitment to create “responsive and accountable” (but not necessarily democratic) governments that significantly reorder the foreign policy relationships pursued by their predecessors. This new bloc has become enmeshed in rising U.S.–French tensions due to the tendency of its leaders to remain “suspicious of anything that comes from abroad, especially from France,” while at the same time seeking to curry special favor with the U.S. policy-making establishment. For this reason France has denounced the Kagame regime and its allies in Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Uganda as the Anglo-Saxon pawns of the United States and other northern industrialized democracies, most notably Japan, which use the English language as a medium of international business.

A final trend of the cold peace is the rising tendency of African countries to militarily intervene in their neighbors against the backdrop of declining military intervention on the part of the Great Powers. One decade after the cold war’s end, Africa’s new bloc of leaders and other regional military powers, such as Nigeria and South Africa, are becoming the new power brokers of African international relations. The validity of this trend is highlighted by several examples: cooperative efforts among Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Uganda (at least prior to the outbreak of the Eritrean-Ethiopian border conflict) to undermine Sudan’s Islamist regime; Rwandan military involvement in Kabila’s 1997 guerrilla victory in Congo-Kinshasa; South Africa’s military intervention in neighboring Lesotho in 1998; and Nigeria’s military intervention in Sierra Leone to restore the democratically elected government of President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, who was returned to power in March 1998.

The most dramatic example of this new trend is the continuing military conflict in Congo-Kinshasa, which foreign observers now commonly refer to as Af-

---

86 Ibid., 88–89.
87 Ibid.
rica’s First World War because of the introduction of ground troops by at least five foreign countries (Angola, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe). In sharp contrast to Great Power conflict in the region during the 1960s, however, when the United States launched a series of very aggressive covert and overt military operations to counter the spread of perceived radical influences within the region, the dawn of the new millennium has witnessed the Clinton administration’s determination to employ its UN Security Council veto to block the dispatch of any UN-sponsored force that includes peace-making in its mandate. This is a clear signal that the United States and other Great Powers are either unwilling or perceive themselves as unable to impose peace in this vast politico-military arena. Peace, according to this vision, can only emerge from the evolving regional military balances of power and the politicomilitary and economic interests of regional actors. In short, the United States and the other Great Powers can only serve as the “facilitators” of an outcome that must be based first and foremost on regional realities and interests.88

Unfortunately, as both external and local powers continue to manipulate the new realities of the cold peace, it is highly likely that undemocratic governments will tend to persist. While the patrons of these regimes—be they French, American, or African—may espouse the rhetoric of democratization, they more likely than not will continue to subordinate the ideal of democratic reform to policies designed to advance their own political and economic agendas. Africa, having provided a battlefield for the cold war, provides another for world and regional powers competing for economic and political influence at the beginning of the new millennium.*

---


* The research on which this article is based was partially funded by a Fulbright grant to Senegal (1994–1996), field research in francophone West Africa funded by Loyola University Chicago, and field research in southern Africa funded by the French Institute for African Research in Harare, Zimbabwe.