

France's Olive Branch Strategy and the 2011 Ivoirian Crisis

Written by Susan Poni Lado

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SUSAN PONI LADO, JUN 3 2014

If indeed the foreign policies of states are, more often than not, hamstrung by realist-*cum*-ethical imperatives then, not only would it be a grave mistake to shy away from probing 'Olive Branch' induced external policies, but it would also stand as a dangerous error in the realm of Foreign Policy Analysis.

That the bulk of intra-state conflicts have occurred on the African continent is undisputed. Curiously thus, what need be earmarked is the contextual reality that these conflicts have been accompanied and legitimised by the hyperbolic narrative of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). At first glance, it may seem apparently logical to suspend realist axioms in a bid to lend support to the analytical purchase of liberal axioms embodied in the rhetoric of human rights, and the protection and advancement of democracy. This lexicology has been so exaggerated that it has led to the inevitable localization of the R2P; in turn, normalising the erosion of state sovereignty.

The reality at hand is that it is not hard to fathom a situation in which realist-tainted militaristic action as the state's *modus vivendi* erodes state sovereignty. This agenda or rather the promotion of democracy has become the credo of most (powerful) states. In keeping with the verity herein, it ought to be noted that another tale exists in parallel with this one. Such a reality can only be effectively explained by means of probing the actions of one such state, whose foreign policy prides itself in the 'Olive Branch' strategy – the Fifth Republic of France.

However, before we commence, it would be incorrect to not (re)visit the fact that although France emerged from the Second World War relatively weakened, she has in her entirety relentlessly perused the reversal of this stance, by means of exerting her influence on the global stage. More specifically, this clout has been showcased in her pre-carre or 'backyard'.

Her display of strength is made most salient in her quest of exporting norms such as democracy to illiberal nations. What accounts for this? In a general exposition, Light (2001:75) is of the opinion that: "governments have a variety of motives for promoting democracy in other countries. One reason is the belief that it is easier to deal with foreign governments that share the same values. They also associate democracy with peace, and they promote it at home to increase their security. . ." By a dissimilar token, Smith (2001:88) presents the argument, centred on the premise of "considerations of human rights and democratic principles could merely mask the objective of forcing states to undertake economic and good governance reforms, which would benefit Western investors".

To state that this obvious fixation with the transposition of democracy is merely ahistorical is ignorant at best. The democratic penchant in Fifth Republic France's foreign policy has quite the pedigree, as Mitterrand in Mason (2012) once affirmed: "promoting and protecting human rights and democratisation processes is an essential component of French and EU foreign policy". This is solidified by Amegan (2012): "in November 1991 at Chaillot Palace in Paris [former French President] Mitterrand redefined the French policy on democracy promotion in Africa".

By implication, France's intervention in the Libyan capital of Tripoli, under the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions 1970 and 1973, under the tutelage of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as well as her intervention in the Côte d'Ivoire under UNSC Resolution 1975 warrants a nuanced exploration of the tale that

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lives in parallel to this one. A more concerning reality is the fact that the French have intervened in Africa at least 50 times since at least the 1960s – in a perpetual bid to showcase her relative (military) capabilities. What explains this perpetual trend?

Why was the Olive Branch the preferred commodity in the economics of France's foreign policy towards the Côte d'Ivoire in 2011? France's foreign policy under the tutelage of Sarkozy is tantamount to Pandora's Box colliding with a Machiavellian Prince and producing an obsessive compulsive nation-state. But, what perpetuates and fosters this disposition? Prior to 'unpacking' this research puzzle let us turn to the sectional demarcations of this paper.

This study will commence with the aim to tackle the theoretical quagmires of foreign policy as it relates to the French-Ivoirian foreign policy. The inherent purpose will be to investigate the bearings that the theoretical tenets have on the case study at hand. Subsequently an overview of the 2011 Ivoirian Crisis and the role of France therein will be presented. In the same vein, this paper will critically draw on the relations between the Cote d'Ivoire and France prior to this intervention. The consequent section will purpose to highlight the simultaneous and sequential relationship between the domestic and the foreign levels of foreign policy making. It will stand to map out the implications of the domestic factors on France's foreign policy, as well as briefly regard the idiosyncrasies in the anatomy of Sarkozyian leadership, insofar as is related to the intervention in 2011.

The penultimate section will delve into the murky waters of the francafrique regime, insofar as it relates to French-Ivoirian relations; and it will stand to offer explanations for France's Olive Branch strategy. The purpose will be to unearth and bring to light the dearth of sinewy relations between France and her African counterpart(s), whilst sequentially building on the logic behind the persistence of the francafrique regime.

Conclusively an evaluation of France-Ivoirian relations under the abode of francafrique will be dissected. In essence, this final section will assume the stead of a nuanced appraisal of the effectiveness of French foreign relations with the Cote d'Ivoire. On account of the conclusions derived from this section, lessons will be drawn on how France, under the new tutelage of Francois Hollande can better execute future foreign policy.

Notably, we should be cautious of being seduced by one-sided explanations of foreign policy. The inherent complexities in interventionist policies abound. As such, the forthcoming section shall proceed with an interrogation of the theoretical imperatives at hand.

Solving the Theoretical Puzzle of France's Foreign Policy

Foreign policy making is not devoid of theoretical assumptions. Before unpacking any research question and because "theory is always for someone and some purpose" (Cox 1981:136), it is commonplace to begin with a theoretical directive or blueprint. The genius herein is that the cause for paradigmatic proficiency is advanced; even more so, a wide caucus of events may be conceptually and contextually delineated (Burchill 2001; Lamy 2001). For the purposes of this paper, we will however look at two sole theoretical postulates, namely: realism and liberalism.

The traditional theoretical terrain has been augmented by the polarisation of and contention between the two schools of thought. If the logic posited by realists holds true, and sovereign states are indeed the principal actors in the international system with their mantra being that of 'self-help' (Waltz 1961; Bull 1977) – then it appears relatively logical to deduce that the norm of R2P has been employed by France as a surrogate for domestic interest.

The legacy of French colonisation entrenched a path-dependency that is so deep-seated that what is normally deemed as international relations is domesticated between France and her West African counterparts. This somewhat occultic pact is seemingly irreversible. There are no qualms about the fact that such relations are imperative for France's continuing systemic grandeur. France's foreign policy in the Côte d'Ivoire stands as the 'Achilles heel' of its foreign policy and existence within the interplay of the changing metric enveloped in the balance of power (La Gloannec 2008; Amegan 2012). La Gloannec (2008) further corroborates this: "if France were suddenly deprived of her overseas endeavours, one would be nothing more than a power lacking resources". Realists are more than happy to walk this line – this is why.

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The Realist Piece of the Puzzle

Within a realist vein, from a systems level-of-analysis (Singer 1961) as a result of an overbearing global government, states are obligated to place national interests at the helm of their external policies. Unsurprisingly, this explains the joust backing the Olive Branch trajectory in the foreign policy of France vis-à-vis the Côte d'Ivoire. We would do injustice to the research puzzle at hand without making brief reference to the assertion that one of the most crucial pinnacles of France's external policy is the protection of its expatriates in Africa. It is no secret that French interventions increasingly straddle the lines between democracy preservation & promotion and realism.

Notwithstanding, this policy warrants a fundamental question: why was this expatriate agenda lambasted during Sarkozy's intervention? What was Sarkozy's end-goal in emphasising the protection of foreign nationals? Indeed, the bid to protect those abroad can be explained both in realist and liberal terms. This gunboat-diplomacy, however, is not without speculation.

Côte d'Ivoire stands as France's leading trade partner, and stands at the top of the hegemonic ladder in the West African region. As according to Bovcon (2009:3): "France remained the pre-eminent commercial trading partner of [the] Côte d'Ivoire. . .". As according to Melly and Darracq (2013:2) "sub-Saharan Africa is an important market for French logistics, service, telecoms and infrastructure companies". The evidential matter underlying this claim sheds light on France's relentless pursuit of national economic interests in its West African economic engine – the Côte d'Ivoire.

As some realists would corroborate, national interest does not exist in a vacuum. Instead, they are tainted by international factors which obfuscate to create a mosaic of domestic-*cum*-international interests. In a speech by Sarkozy in 2011 prior to the deployment of Operation *Licorne* under a UN mandate; Sarkozy deplored the Ivoirian situation and asserted that any failure to resolve the Ivoirian crisis would be tragedy. He further made the claim that "Our destinies are interlinked, we share the same values" (Panapress 2011). This statement holds both realist and liberal undertones.

The realist elements can be seen in the statement regarding the intermeshed nature of foreign policies or 'destinies'. Realists note that national interest equates power (Morgenthau 1978). National interests are therefore at the helm of states' foreign policy. To claim that destinies are intermeshed is to insinuate that national interests are intermeshed. Such a metric will either be mutually constitutive or not. As in the case of her former colonies – France's perennial large-win set negates the latter.

The (Neo-) Liberal Piece of the Puzzle

If indeed the liberal posit holds true, and Sarkozy's statement and his related intervention can be marked as "the fact of human interdependence for material needs leads them to perceive a common interest. . ." then surely the assertion regarding destinies being linked necessitates that the relationship to follow will either be one of two things: a) mutually inclusive or b) mutually exclusive.

Of course, as a realist it is acceptable to walk this line; as a liberal this argument is defective at worst and fallacious at best. This point is in fact where the shoe pinches for liberal scholars, who stand at odds with realists to agree that international relations are tainted by non-altruistic factors or elements. Sarkozy's decision to intervene further solidified his relative gains. These relative gains were, in turn, solidified by his large Putnamian win-set, lambasted by the chorus of democracy advancement. It stands as a truism that political instability at the sub-state level has the potentiality to precariously affect the (domesticated) foreign policy of State A in State B. Like a deck of cards, the Côte d'Ivoire predicament precariously hangs on the balance with the potentiality to yield negative effects for the Western investors therein.

To the neoliberal institutionalist, institutions are the only gateway to the effective articulation of international relations. For instance, regard how France's contemporary interventions have all been primarily underscored by multilateral institutional arrangements. Are institutions the only way to effectively exercise foreign policy? Neoliberal

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institutionalists seem to firmly believe so.

France “deploys approximately 3,000 troops – under a UN mandate – to patrol a buffer zone between the rebel-controlled northern regions and the government-controlled south” (Hansen 2008). This branch of neoliberals is more than happy to walk the line of a dovish France, due to the fact that her institutional inclinations negate any hint of realist-tainted Machiavellian self-interest. That is, it denudes France of possible opprobrium pertaining to sub-imperialism/neo-colonialism. Under the abode of the multilateral institution the perusal of the common good – however evasive – is the norm.

Realists, on the other hedge of the theoretical fence, beg to differ. They would contend that France would only dispense of institutions when advantageous to France, and not due to some humanistic credo of the common good. Given France's waning power disposition, and (interestingly) in keeping with neoliberal institutionalists, the only way for France to successfully achieve Parisian imperatives is via acting under the abode of multilateral institutions *inter-alia* distributing democratic axioms to the illiberal.

This disposition is supplemented by a two-fold assertion: 1) France's integration into the European Union (EU) further pressures her to forego the days of unilateralism and the liberty she once enjoyed under the veil of colonialism; 2) France can no longer enjoy the lime light, in face of the changing metrics of global power. Emerging nations such as the Brazil, Russia, India and China and South Africa (BRICS) grouping, are also competitors for economic resources on the African continent. Gone are the days of major player. Multilateralism hence becomes a means to an end and not an end in itself.

This disposition, however, further debones the reality pertaining to the decreasing formidability of the *francafrique*. France can no longer enjoy the hold she once did with her West African counterpart(s). Multilateralism accompanied by the use of force is the only way that France is able to manage *francafrique*. The dynamics are changing.

When Hawks Coo

French actions in the Côte d'Ivoire in 2011 testify to the fact that doves are not the only ones that coo.

Round two of the Ivoirian elections on the 28th of November 2010 (following an unsuccessful attempt in 2002), unsurprisingly opened up Pandora's Box. These elections polarised Laurent Gbagbo and Alassane Ouattara “for this reason and of strategic importance it was inevitable which this electoral contest would decide the long-term future of the country” (Mbeki 2011:1). The decision to host elections, regardless of un-conducive conditions was not well thought, provided that the Ivoirian government had a low win-set “the international community insisted that what [the] Côte d'Ivoire required to end its crisis was to hold democratic elections, even though the conditions did not exist for such elections. Though they knew that this proposition was fundamentally wrong, the Ivoirians could not withstand the international pressure to hold the elections” (Mbeki 2011:1).

After the ballots were cast, Ouattara emerged as victor of his anti-French competitor Gbagbo. This victory, was however short-lived and, of course, not devoid of contestation. How did events, then, given the ahistorical nature of governmental friction, pan out?

Pre-emptively, incumbent President Laurent Gbagbo refused defeat. “As provided by law, Gbagbo contested the fairness of the elections in certain parts of the country, especially the north” of the Côte d'Ivoire (Mbeki 2011:2). Gbagbo, clearly deemed that his win-set was higher and that relative gains would be accrued by contesting the end-result, as well as, vehemently rejecting to sign a document cementing his resignation. As Kouassi (2011) in The Guardian quoted Alain Juppe: “We demand . . . that Gbagbo's departure be preceded by the publication of a document with his signature in which he resigns from office and recognizes Ouattara as President”.

This juncture was in fact where the last straw was had for Gbagbo and his ilk. Gbagbo, given his bounded rationality felt that he was immune to defeat. He managed to evade the original results by manipulating the Constitutional Court in a bid to be re-elected (Simonen 2012:364). The turmoil emerging from Pandora's Box became very much real

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when intra-state violence beset the Ivoirian capital of Abidjan. “. . . Ouattarra launched a military offensive on 28th March 2011” (Simonen 2012: 364). This painstaking reality obligated the international community to act. The French Hawk cooed at the execution of UNSC Resolution 1975. France, at the command of Sarkozy embraced the ‘Olive Branch’, ceaselessly deploying Operation Licorne forces as interlocutors in the unfolding crisis on the 9th of April 2011.

It comes as no surprise that such a move, explicitly lent support to the Ouattarra camp, eventually forcefully capturing and ousting Gbagbo. Why is this the case? Ouattarra firmly built his good standing with Sarkozy during the signing of the Ouagadougou Peace Accords in 2007. Moreover, in 2010, all protocols not observed: Gbagbo “. . . did not attend the France-Africa Summit in Nice in 2010” (Moncrieff 2012:29). This is where the evidence of Sarkozy-Gbagbo relations souring is made obvious. Almost counter-intuitively, France’s support for Ouattarra signalled a duplex reality: 1) that France tends to support those that unflinchingly support her and 2) French support for democracy and its expatriates is more pronounced than ever.

Or perhaps not. The trivial reality in the above mentioned, is that the deployment of French troops in the Côte d’Ivoire was a masquerade for the safeguard of French domestic imperatives in the Côte d’Ivoire. The coo of the hawk signals relative gains and there is no better way to ensure that those gains are safeguarded than the execution of Mutually Enticing Opportunities (MEO). These gains shall now be highlighted in the fourth section.

Domestic Imperatives

Far from being pedantic, Sarkozy’s decision to deploy forces under the command of the R2P received torrents of opprobrium. The most painstaking critique which urged Sarkozy to be more proactive was by French diplomats. A public letter was submitted to French newspaper Le Monde (2011) cited in Chrisafis (2012), brandishing the inactive diplomacy of Sarkozy. In turn, insinuating that Sarkozy’s diplomatic way of operation was opportunistic. These assertions were enveloped in the claim that “France’s voice in the world has disappeared. . .” Siphoning Sarkozy’s public image even more, the letter further highlighted that: “Africa escapes us, the Mediterranean snubs us and, China has crushed us and Washington ignores us”.

This opprobrium does not come without cause. France embarrassingly was late in intervening in the Arab Awakening; and to throw the baby out with the bath water – inadvertently supported Tunisian and Egyptian dictatorships, with former Foreign Minister Alliot-Marie enjoying the hospitality of the French and giving the Tunisian government advice on how to best deal with the turmoil (BBC News Europe 2011).

This is where the (domestic) concomitant atrophy of France’s perceived grandeur begins. As Chrisafis (2011:12) supports: “the timing of the diplomatic rebellion is particularly damaging: Sarkozy is the current president of the G8 and the G20 economic forums and is preparing for a re-election bid next year”. Considering that French strategic culture is intrinsically, sequentially and systematically linked to its national pride, it comes as no surprise that Sarkozy immediately changed the route of his diplomacy. Such is the power of the news media in the making of foreign policy Sarkozy immediately became pro-active, as witnessed in the Fifth Republic’s militaristic intervention in Libya, the Côte d’Ivoire and Mali.

What can role theory tell us about the perennial currents in French foreign policy? Role theorist Krotz (2002:6) defines role theory as the “domestically shared views and understandings regarding the proper role and purpose of one’s own state as a social collectivity in the international arena”. What bearings does this have on the external actions of France?

Domestic self-understandings, more often than not, tend to evade international priorities. For example, it would be foolhardy to not, from this point, retrospect on former President Jacques Chirac’s reluctance to intervene in the 2003 Iraq War in a bid to mask his domestic shortcomings. Driving the point further home, according to poll evidence, by 2009, 72% of Frenchmen hold the belief that France’s global image had waned after Sarkozy stepped into office in 2007 (Eurobarometer 2009:4).

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That the grandeur of French diplomacy has waned comes as undisputed. That Sarkozy wished to save face after his tardiness in the Arab Awakenings in 2011 too, is undisputed. Nicolas Sarkozy and his small web of advisers in the Elysee have emerged from the diplomatic fumble to help engineer [humanitarian] intervention in Libya and the Ivory Coast, and are showing a new robust international profile" (Marquand 2011). The seriousness of this claim, is evidential in the fact that Sarkozy fired foreign minister Alliot-Marie on account of her aforementioned Tunisian escapades. As La Gloannec (2008) informs us a few days after the diplomatic rebellion, ". . . Sarkozy finally changed course. He sacked Alliot-Marie and appointed in her place the experienced Alain Juppe, a former Prime Minister and Foreign Minister under Chirac" (La Gloannec 2008).

Exploring the Cerebral Territory of the Domestic-International Nexus

The international level and the domestic level are interesting bed-fellows. There can be no coherent explication of the inner-workings of International Relations (IR) without taking as our starting point that foreign policy is perpetuated and informed by domestic policy (Putnam 1988; Krasner 1972).

This assertion commands two clarifications: 1) we cannot remain submissive to the primordial assertion that foreign policy is devoid of domestic imperatives and 2) we advance the paradigmatic proficiency of IR theory by accepting that international imperatives (Putnamian Level II) runs sequentially with domestic imperatives (Putnamian Level I) (Putnam 1988). Herein lays a vital question: to what degree did the systemic-interplay at level II have a bearing on Level I? Or to what degree did the two-levels of political life have a bearing on Sarkozy's 2011 Ivoirian escapade?

Before answering this question, we need to advance several demarcations or posits. Bureaucratic red-tape renders Sarkozy and a handful of his protégé's single-handedly in charge of French foreign policy. French foreign policy continues to be the special preserve of the French President as inevitable in the Fifth Republic; therefore rendering the opinion of ministries in the lower rungs of government obsolete.

It stands as an undeniable fact that Sarkozy's 2008 bid to "turn the page on complacency, secrecy, and ambiguity for good [and] to go beyond a simple –personal relationship with Africa" (Gnanguenon 2011:3) runs at a loggerheads with his deeds. Moncrieff (2012:12) is of the opinion that "the [2007] Dakar speech remains an important marker in Sarkozy's position on African issues. It is part of a strand of thinking on Africa that is prevalent on the French right. Often used as a justification for alliances with non-democratic leaders, it emphasises Africa's unchanging traditions". Such is the logic of the *francafrique*.

To borrow from Sarkozy in a speech in Dakar: "Colonisation was a huge mistake, but from it was born the embryo of a common destiny. And this idea is of particular importance to me" (Dibussi 2007). Campbell (2002) cited in Charbonneau (2008:291) is of the sentiment that in order for France to stabilise Côte d'Ivoire meant to resume its integration into the structure of the French hegemony and global circulation" The sustenance of French hegemony is apparent, that is why "for political reasons and a lack of resources, France simply cannot act alone anymore" (Charbonneau 2008:290).

How has France's domestic relevance sustained? Given the reality that "gradually, budgetary concern and a changed strategic climate have encouraged France to adopt a new multilateral approach" (Melly and Daracq 2013) we can only infer from this reality that multilateralism serves as surrogate for domestic shortcomings or mishaps.

Although, Sarkozy in 2007 signalled that his African policy would change, his words stood in contrast to his deeds. France cannot exist without Africa. It is without doubt that France's ties are unwavering. His lip-service paid is indicative of his unpredictable persona which can only be understood by probing his idiosyncrasies.

Foreign policy decision-making is a social process, and individuals are social beings. It is thenceforth a crucial task to turn to the individual level of analysis in searching for less-oversimplified explanations. Axelrod (1976) alerts us to the fact that cognitive mapping is a formidable contingent of Foreign policy at the individual-level. As such, the following section delves into this dimension.

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Sarkozy's Persona

The contention that Sarkozy's tutelage of the Fifth Republic was far from subtle and over-personalised is best understood by an analysis of Sarkozy's personality.

There have been claims or a host of sources have espoused Sarkozy's personality as akin to an 'ideological amusement park' and erratic (Marlière 2009). As according to Cole (2012:312), "Presidents of the Fifth Republic are influenced by role perceptions of appropriate behaviour, by past presidential practice, and by underscoring the rituals associated with the office". In what ways, then, has Sarkozy acted differently from his predecessors?

Sarkozy during his term was erratic and opportunistic. He walks a tightrope between disjuncture and continuity; with claims of rupture being rendered void by actions alluding to the further entrenchment of colonial ties. Sarkozy's erraticism is further made apparent with brief reference to his Mediterranean relations. Why does Sarkozy lambast illiberalism yet supports or entertains licentious ties with leaders of these illiberal nations? The equation herein does not make realistic sense. Like the Pope and Duke in Niccolo Machiavelli's Prince in Milner and Kirkpatrick (1995:19) "Sarkozy and his protégé ". . . are shrewd opportunists and know how to use the main chance well, an opinion that is proved by the evidence of what they achieved when given the opportunity".

To corroborate my reference pertaining to Sarkozy's erraticism, opportunism and lack of policy direction, a brief reference to Sarkozy's Mediterranean foreign policy is in order. Reflect on the instance when "Khadafi was welcomed by Sarkozy at the Elysee Palace and stayed five full days in Paris with a delegation of several hundred people. . . France sold a nuclear reactor to Libya and signed contracts for ten billion Euros' for other equipment, including a deal for 3, 2 billion Euros' for the purchase of 21 aircraft. "French [former] State Secretary for Human rights, Nama Yade, who had the courage to criticize the visit said: "our country is not a door mat on which a leader-terrorist or otherwise, can wipe off the blood of his country" (Van Herpen 2012:6).

Unsurprisingly, and adding to the red-tape and clout of the Elysee - Yade was removed and deployed ". . . to the unimportant sports portfolio" (Le Gouriellec 2011:3). Clearly, there is a stark disjuncture between words and deeds; denouncing human rights violations on the one hand, whilst entertaining the instigators thereof on the other. "Francafrrique has operated in secrecy. It may be compared to the CIA in the US, though, its mission and scope is narrower. Its goal, consistent from 1960 to 2013, has been to promote and protect French national interests in Africa by all means necessary. These means include modus operandi that use all the paraphernalia of information gathering, technical and military assistance, including coups to strengthen French objectives and defend France's allies in Africa" (Kaba 2013).

Bovcon (2011:7) reveals that since at least the 1960s: "after their independence, France established with its former sub-Saharan African colonies a network of independent links, covering numerous issue-areas such as trade (trade agreements), the monetary system (CFA France), security (defence agreements), the education system and so on". "Whether Sarkozy's vision amounts to a coherent foreign policy, however, is another matter. It must be said that his political style has undermined his plan. His hyperactivity, personal diplomacy and high media exposure contributed to some success, such as the Lisbon Treaty and the liberation of Bulgarian nurses from a Libyan jail" (Vaisse 2008:9). Bovcon (2011 :101) postulates: "the most striking feature of the francafrrique regime, however, was the salience of its informal component, which was put in place by Jacques Foccart, a former intelligence member during the Resistant Movement and de Gaulle's chief adviser on African affairs.

This important structure was composed of highly personalised, family-like relations between the French and African political elites, organized around a handful of pivotal actors such as Foccart, Jean-Christophe Mitterrand, Charles Pasque and the leading members of the Elf Petroleum Company". Moncrieff (2012:29) adds substance to this claim by noting how "Sarkozy was particularly concerned with promoting France's commercial interests, and was relatively successful in doing so. This was demonstrated when Bolloré won the contract to manage Abidjan's new port, which opened in April 2008. The Bolloré affiliate, Euro RSCG, also acted as consultant to Gbagbo in his electoral campaign in 2010".

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To conclude, the very fact that France employed the olive Branch as the first commodity testifies to a deeper logic – that the francAfrique is waning this invariably tied at the analytical cord to France's general or overall waning clout. For example, FrancAfrique was traditionally maintained or sustained or upheld by normal/public diplomatic efforts. Force had to be used. From this juncture, we need to analyse the francAfrique regime. If it is indeed so that France's ties are unwavering, how are these ties fostered and maintained?

The FrancAfrique “Billiard Ball”

International regimes are contingent on rules and norms (Krasner 1972:2). As a consequence, any alteration in the rules and norms of these regimes would necessitate a change in the self-understanding of the regime. The functional logic of the regime holds realist tendencies, which straddle the lines of liberalism.

Wendt (1992:4) states that: “international regimes do not only reflect the interest of the state, they are able to influence and even change the interests and underlying identities”. This underlines the logical claim that the advancement of the national interest is, more often than not institutionalised. Is it possible for us to legitimately provide explications of systemic phenomena with reference to sub-system phenomena?

Singer (1961:77) seems to think so. It is here that we turn to the levels of analysis problem. The third image (systemic level) of foreign policy making is simply not enough. Waltz's (1959:12) first and second images are warranted. They also, run in a (similar) theoretical concurrent with Putnam's (1988) logic. We can by no means, fully comprehend foreign policy with reference to a unitary referent or focal point – such is the levels-of-analysis problem (Singer 1961). What we ought to do, is move between all three levels in order to gauge a nuanced conclusion. It is indeed noteworthy to earmark the fact that as a result of hyper-globalisation, international relations or foreign policy – more specifically – operates in a process of constant interactionism between cacophonies of levels. Then it seems painfully logical that Sarkozy's 2007 claim that a new chapter in Franco-Ivoirian relations would be hedged indefinitely evades realist normality, essentially the occult tradition of francAfrique evades Sarkozy's political spin.

Beyond this, it is important to ask whether France can truly disengage the *status quo*. If the securitization of the national interest is tantamount to survival, then surely Sarkozy's bid to end the traditional francAfrique ties is realistically fallacious or nonsensical; and founded on greater system necessities.

Current relations and the France's involvement in the 2011 Ivoirian debacle, have served to perpetuate a well-established, primordial order. Bovcon (2009: 283) states that “. . . sub-Saharan Africa became central to France's ambition to middle power status in the international system”. This particularly holds true in that “close links with sub-Saharan countries guaranteed France access to basic strategic mineral resources, such as oil and uranium, and helped maintain the monopoly of its companies and export consumer goods in this part of the world”.

This (well-endowed) disposition was founded on a reciprocal interactionism. What is meant by this? African leaders who perpetuated the francAfrique also benefited monetarily and politically; for example, African leaders were offered an African cell in the Elysee – to coalesce with African leaders over policy issues insofar as they are related to the continent. Such an organization warrants further suspicion: why do France-Africa relations go beyond the normal protocols inasmuch as a section in the Elysee was given to non-European individuals?

One fitting explanation pertains to the fact that given France's UNSC seat as Permanent Five member, she is able to accrue a bulk of her votes from French leaders. Such relations clearly evade normality. By turning inter-state international relations obsolete they aesthetically appear as domestic relation, far removed from traditional international relations.

The Self-Understanding of FrancAfrique

Near undeniable is the reality that francAfrique has changed. Or more ostensibly, the nature or normal disposition of francAfrique has changed. Systemic causal factors alert us that the face and interplay of strings in this near-billiard ball web of francAfrique relations has changed due to several reasons, not to over-exhaust the purposes of this paper

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I shall refer to four of them: 1) generational changes, for example the death of Francafrigue pundit: Félix Houphouët-Boigny and Jacques Foccart; 2) French integration into the European Union (EU); 3) The Euro Zone Crisis, as well as domestic-level factors.

Smith (2006) in Bovcon (2009:295) cements the above postulate: "French are undergoing an intense, nostalgic fascination with the past by which they address a deeper fear that France is losing important political, social and cultural role that it used to play in the past". Added to this fear are several concerns, including but not limited to: ". . . economic recessions, rising unemployment, immigration from the former colonies, disappointment with the leftist and socialist movements, and integration into the EU. All of these factors in a way attack the national identity of France's grandeur that is intrinsically linked to *francafrigue*".

Bovcon (2009:296) is of the opinion that "the former French President, Nicolas Sarkozy has announced a rupture with *francafrigue* by establishing a pragmatic, transparent and primarily economic relationship with Africa". Africa remains strategically vital to Paris's insatiable thirst for minerals. For instance, French energy giant, the AREVA Company derives at least forty per cent of its mineral resources from West Africa.

As Charbonneau (2008:281) posits: "France-Afrique was used as a political symbol and as an ideology to authorise among other things projects for favouring the development of African natural and human resources to the benefit of France". He further goes on to shed light on the fact that "bilateral agreements were signed between French and African leaders that in many ways guaranteed French influence and presence in Africa". The stark reality of such bilateral accords is that most are signed and developed in secrecy. Certain bilateral defence agreements are invariably attached to France's commercial interests, for example.

Given this, France unswervingly assumed the role of gendarme/military giant in West Africa. For instance, consider, Charbonneau's (2008:289) claim that: "France's national interest and the politics of the Cold War required that France maintain order, support various dictatorships, or, in some instances, stage, plan, and support coups d'états, assassinations, and so on". It can be derived that the French invariably foster complicity in African leaders – making them puppets in the nuances and nexuses of their foreign policy.

What Now, Post-Gbagbo?

This section purposes to reflect on the nature of French-Ivoirian relations after the 2011 international intervention. How has the basic self-understanding of French-Ivoirian relations changed? Indeed, Sarkozy's propelling of French Foreign Policy implicitly brought to light the relentless interaction between domestic-level imperatives and international-level constraints. As shown, the systematic interplay of at the domestic-level served as the instigator behind a host of foreign policy actions (Putnam 1988).

Sarkozy, despite his constant external policy escapades did not accrue the essential number of votes to serve a second term. Francois Hollande was victor in the 2012 Presidential elections of the Fifth republic. However, what is worthy for us to note is that Sarkozy's foreign policy under the sanction of the changing graces and ravages of the changing global metric was successful. He managed to pacify several intra-state conflicts hamstrung by the stead of illiberalism.

However, what his foreign policy action alludes to is the deeper assertion that France's global clout is on the wane, which is linked to the subsequent dissipation of the nature of the *francafrigue* relationship. This stead has been evidenced in the *modus vivendi* of France, embedded in her insatiable appetite for instruments of multilateralism such as the UN, EU and NATO. However, in the spirit of being nuanced, we cannot negate that Sarkozy's execution of the Fifth Republic's foreign policy has been marred by 'amateurism and erraticism' (Van Herpen 2010:1) resulting in apparent incohesive and lagging-in-direction tainted foreign policies.

Additionally, the France-Ivoirian relationship after the fact, (and under the tutelage of Francois Hollande) still remains tainted by *francafrigue* – however changing. A related question is then warranted: how, can Francois Hollande better implement French foreign policy for the future?

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Three points are in order: 1) Hollande can choose to evade erraticism and indecisiveness by embracing morality and greater pragmatism; 2) In so doing, he invariably assumes a shift from Sarkozyian-infused path-dependency which may serve to lighten the siphoning French image and clout on the African continent; 3) Hollande ought to learn to embrace the power in the greater utilisation of soft power variables. Although humanitarian intervention still plays a salient role in France's foreign policy (which is unsurprising given her democratic-standing). Nye (2010) has proven that a penchant for soft power in foreign policy (i.e.: as seen in the dispensation of the *lingua franca*), is, like the 'Olive Branch' an equally formidable contingent.

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