

‘Sense and sensibility’: the role of France and French interests in European development policy since 1957

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Since 1957, France has been heavily involved in the definition and implementation of a European development policy. It has considered this to be a way to maintain French interests and influence over Africa, while sharing the costs of such a policy with the other EU member states. More recently, the French approach towards European development policy has been challenged by the enlargement of the European Union, reforms in the Commission and international factors such as the growing role of the international financial institutions and the end of the Cold War. These changes simultaneously contribute to a process of reshaping French bilateral and multilateral development policies. At a time when France and Europe are in the process of reforming their approach, a case study of France is relevant for several reasons. It allows for observation of cross-cutting influences, for analysis of both national and European interests in development policy, and an assessment of the levels of coordination, coherence and complementarity between the Commission and member states and within member states.

The use of the expression ‘sense and sensibility’ (after Jane Austen’s novel) in this chapter can be understood as a reference to the construction of the European Union as well as to French behaviour towards, and its attachment to, Africa. ‘Sense’ relates to France’s choice for Europe. ‘Sensibility’ refers to the highly politicised relations between France and its former colonies, which explain the difficulties or impossibility to reform the ‘familial’ relations with French-speaking Black Africa. Economic reasons pushed France towards Europe, while political and symbolic motivations prevented it from leaving Africa. From the initial decision not to sacrifice its African vocation for the construction of the EEC, France has been hesitating between Europe and Africa, unable to choose which link should be privileged. France tried to win on both counts. Europe contributed much to the rebuilding of France’s economy and to shaping it as a modern country, while Africa was still considered a major instrument in maintaining the rank of France on the international scene. This

non-choice generated inefficiency, incoherence and competition between bilateral and multilateral policies, and disillusion among public opinion. Gradually, European concerns moved to the top of the agenda, while Africa became of minor interest. However, there are obvious and positive signs of change in French African policy. From the 1990s onwards, things have been evolving more quickly and a lot of factors have had an influence in France, in Europe and in Africa, contributing to the reshaping of this three-pole relationship.

This chapter focuses on the French impact on EC development policy and explains how its influence evolved over time.¹ The first part shows the different channels used by France to contribute to the elaboration of the European development policy. The second part explains the reasons for its influence. The third part presents recent changes and the decrease in France's presence and impact.

In order to define 'how' and 'why' France had a major impact on the conception and the making of the European development policy, some theoretical tools are necessary. Both Europe and France have to be comprehended as complex subjects. Europe is not only a group of states and states are not monolithic actors. Plurality of national actors, non-state mechanisms and actors, diversity of administrative cultures (even within one country), and the capacity of European institutions to acquire some autonomy, all have to be taken into account in order to understand the making of European public policies and to measure the role played by member states, administrations, parliaments, pressure groups and others. Neo-institutionalism, federalism, neo-functionalism and theories about a European model of governance enable one to go beyond intergovernmental approaches, mainly represented by the neo-realist theories (Hoffmann, 1993; Moravcsik, 1999 and 2000), which are still useful for analysing French positions on the international scene and comparing them with those of other state actors (Lequesne, 1998).

Different channels to shape EC development policy

France has contributed largely to the formulation and implementation of European development cooperation policy. It did so through offering institutional models, people, funding, ideas and policies.

Organisational models and human resources

French influence over the initial structure of the Commission was large. Originally, the Commission was built according to French administrative specifications, implemented by its long-term secretary Emile Noel. The impact of this structure was aptly illustrated by a highly placed European civil servant from the Netherlands: 'we live under a 19th century French administrative system. A reporter reports to a deputy head of department, who reports to the head of department, who reports to the director, who reports to an assistant of the

Director General, who reports to the DG, who talks to the Commission Cabinet which finally talks to the Commissioner himself" (quoted by Page, 1997: 8). It is difficult to refer to a European model of administration seen as a particular system, for 'Directorates-General themselves have developed very distinct traditions' (Rouban, 1998: 92). Nevertheless, over the years harmonisation increased, through the progressive sharing of common knowledge, common interests and common know-how. In early times, French civil servants were interested in a European career, as the national political situation was uncertain (France changed regime in 1958). The room of manoeuvre of the first civil servants was large because they lacked guidelines from their ministries. They had to work on an institutional model for the Commission with their colleagues of the other member states. The model of the French ministerial cabinets was adopted by European Commissioners.

On the administrative level, France has always been heavily involved in the making and implementation of European development policy. At the beginning, many French civil servants worked within the Directorate-General of the Commission in charge of development issues and many of them remained within that DG for their whole career. For long, as a kind of implicit rule, the Development Commissioner was French. From 1958 to 1985, all Development Commissioners were French (Lemaignen, Rochereau, Deniau, Cheysson, Pisani). The choice of a French Commissioner was perceived as logical because the African Associates expressed their preference for an already known interlocutor, and because France had greater experience and presence in Africa (Lemaignen, 1964: 57). Moreover, some former '*administrateurs coloniaux*' (high civil servants in the colonies) were re-oriented within the DG Development after decolonisation occurred in the early 1960s. For instance, Jacques Ferrandi entered the Commission in 1958 and left his mark on the shaping of DG VIII and the creation of the EDF. At that time, France was very much interested in the work of two Directorates-General: Development and, above all, Agriculture. It would be erroneous to think that French civil servants recruited by the Commission follow instructions given by the French Permanent Representation (PR) in Brussels. Nevertheless, they still have privileged relationships with their colleagues from the PR. According to Lequesne (1993: 202): 'French civil servants within the Commission do not seem to be confronted by a conflict of loyalty between France and the Community but feel entrusted with a double loyalty to both of them.' A French administrator at the Commission quoted by Lequesne stated: 'I particularly inform the French Representation because, as a European civil servant and as a Frenchman, I do consider as a priority that the community dimension be well understood and perceived in my own country.' It cannot be denied that Commissioners in general are not subordinated but linked to their governments (personal communication, 2000a).

The choice of language is another sensitive point for people at the Commission. At the beginning there was no rule on this matter. Until the first

enlargement, the French language was the only medium of reflection and decision within the European Community. It was even suggested that the French President Pompidou conditioned the EC membership of the United Kingdom to the arrival at the Commission of bilingual English civil servants (Guérivière, 1992: 54)! Progressively, the use of the English language has taken over that of French, which was still prevailing in DG VIII/DG DEV until the nomination of Danish Commissioner Nielson in 1999.

The financial channel

The financial influence of France on European development policy has mainly been exerted within the framework of the specific policy towards Africa and later the ACP. The main instrument for the programming and implementation of Lomé/Cotonou aid is the EDF. The structure and functioning of this fund were inspired by French methods. As early as 1946 the FIDES (Investment Fund for Economic and Social Development) was created in France in order to re-launch agricultural activities in the colonies by public funds. In the same year, Jean Monnet himself initiated a four-year project for the modernisation and economic equipment of the *métropole* and the overseas territories. The FIDES inspired the first FEDOM (Overseas European Development Fund), which became the EDF. The EDF is programmed for five years and does not belong to the Community budget. Its resources come from national contributions on a more or less voluntary basis and are controlled by the member states, without the involvement of the European Parliament. These features clearly distinguish the EDF and EC development cooperation from other relevant actors. As phrased by Delphin (1992: 44): 'the multilateral institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have a sound economic approach, while the EDF philosophy of action allows to accept projects that can produce political or symbolic benefits even if their economic profitability is low'.

The EDF Committee can be a theatre for negotiations and bargaining between the member states, and between the Commission and some member states, above all when projects imply political interests. The EDF Committee is led by the Commission and composed of representatives of the member states. A funding proposal has to be accepted by qualified majority. This is a fundamental step within the project cycle. ACP countries usually tend to privilege their 'boss' for market attribution (Ravenhill, 1995). This kind of re-bilateralisation of ACP–EU relations can be explained through clientelism (Ravenhill, 1995) or paternalism (Delphin, 1992). Power does not lie in the ACP–EU joint institutions but in Community bodies such as the Commission, the Council of Ministers and the EDF Committee, and also in the EC member states themselves.

Thus the permanency of bilateral relationship between some ACP countries and some powerful member states within the European scheme is understandable. This situation is strengthened by the lack of coherence and cooper-

ation between the ACP states as a whole. They do not defend common interests and do not gather their forces to negotiate. Former French colonies spontaneously kept on dealing with France first, even for European matters. As a former colonial power, France lobbies for projects presented by its privileged African partners. One should also bear in mind that, before 1995, France was among the greatest contributors to the EDF. Now it is the biggest contributor. According to Delphin (1992: 74): 'The political aspect is *de facto* strengthened by the voting mechanism and the largest contributors have the heaviest weight in the decision process.' During Lomé I, II and III, France imposed to allocate aid towards best performing or promising countries and to countries which had a longer association with the EC. This inheritance of a trend in French colonial aid has now moved towards aid for the poorest under the pressure and the preferences of most of the other member states, and along with the enlargement of the EU (Anyadike-Danes and Anyadike-Danes, 1992).

A philosophy of action

The 'philosophy of action' conveyed by France has long relied on its will and capacity to transpose its bilateral positions within the Community approach. The Lomé model, inherited from the Treaty of Rome and the Yaoundé Convention, was progressively adapted according to the positions of some other member states and changes on the world scene. Nevertheless, the maintenance of a specific link with Africa, especially initially, can be understood as an expression of France's will.

The Lomé Convention was long considered to be an embodiment of the New International Economic Order: political neutrality of the EC, equality of the partners, interdependence and mutual interests, non-reciprocal trade preferences, additional aid, joint management of aid and new cooperation instruments (Stabex) were the innovative and promising principles that structured that model of North–South relationship. However, this supposedly new relationship still relied on a colonial basis although some countries, such as Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda, started to negotiate an association with Europe as early as the end of the 1960s (Lister, 1988: 60). In 1973, new negotiations between the EC and its African Associates were to lead to a successor agreement to the second Yaoundé Convention, which would come to an end in 1975. During those negotiations, France and Great Britain did not have the same interests nor the same weight. France accepted that some British colonies should join the Association, as long as its own relations with the AAMS (Associated African and Malagasy States) and the franc zone African countries would not be affected. Then, France maintained that only African and Caribbean British colonies should become signatories of the new agreement. The African states of the Commonwealth were considered 'associable' while the Asian states of the Commonwealth were not (Grilli, 1993: 26). France believed that the entry of Asian states would unbalance the privileged relation that Europe set up with Africa. The arrival of new African countries

in the agreement was accepted precisely because it strengthened the coherence of a regional approach. The shift from Yaoundé to Lomé shows the permanency of a regional approach defended by the French, against a more global framework for European policy as advocated by Britain, the Netherlands and Germany. In 1957, France had strong arguments to impose its own conception of a European development policy. 'By contrast, when Britain sought admission, the EEC was already established. The Community could exist perfectly well without the UK; thus Britain had less bargaining power than France had possessed' (Lister, 1988: 62).

Another element of France's philosophy of action is the way in which it has transposed its will of being 'the champion of the Third World' and 'an advocate for the poor among the rich' to Europe (Naudet, 1997: 166). Lomé as *the* model for cooperation with the South expresses this idea. Nevertheless, despite interesting and innovative principles about development cooperation, Europe and France did not have sufficient financial means and lacked the political will to achieve that goal. The Lomé model has not been applied to the other developing continents and has not become *the* European development cooperation model. Lomé was, and will remain, an ad hoc response to a given situation.

To summarise briefly, one can say that, through different channels, France has durably influenced European development policy. It did so via the administrative and institutional level, with French civil servants, and thanks to development cooperation instruments such as the EDF. In addition, its philosophy of action played a part, in which Lomé has been perceived as the preservation of a specific relationship with Africa and as part of the European foreign policy on the world scene.

The reasons for France's influence

In 1957 and the following years, France was the main actor within the construction of an institutional link between Europe and Africa. The reasons for the French involvement in European development policies arose from the strong economic, historical, political and strategic links between France and Africa. Although the neo-realistic approach as such is insufficient to explain all that is at stake here, it is useful to understand French imperatives as regards the European construction in the late 1950s. Firstly, France had to maintain independence in French diplomacy. Secondly, the construction of a Western European entity should give France the means to reach some of the national goals that it could not achieve on its own any longer. Thirdly, France had to preserve a sphere of influence abroad, mainly in Africa and in the Middle East (Hoffmann, 1993: 128–9). Moravcsik, who also considers the state as the main actor on the international scene, refutes the idea that the prime interests that underlie French politics rely on political and strategic considerations such as the *grandeur* of France or military security. According to him, French involvement in the European construction was motivated by the preferential

trade advantages that could be obtained for industry and agriculture in order to modernise the French economy (Moravcsik, 1999 and 2000). One can also consider both arguments – the political one and the economic one – as complementary. The French will to achieve a European ‘African policy’ was definitely linked to these economic and political considerations.

The French need for a European development policy: the idea of EurAfrica

According to Ravenhill (1995: 105): ‘France’s determination not only to maintain but also to expand its sphere of influence on Africa has set it apart from the other European former colonial powers.’ The relation between France and Africa was more than an economic arrangement and relied on more complex determinants. This can be explained thanks to concepts such as history, duty, civilising mission and familial relationship. Many francophone African political leaders were involved in French political life, as Members of Parliament or even as ministers. As François Mitterrand stated in 1957: ‘Without Africa, there will be no History of France in the 21st century’ (Mitterrand, 1957: 237). Just after the signing of the Rome Treaty, France entered a process of institutional change: de Gaulle was called back to power, a new constitutional regime was set up and the African colonies were offered independence within a new organisation called ‘the French Community’, designed to be a transitional body. All colonies approved this new framework by referendum except Guinea-Conakry.

The newly established European Community became a kind of obligatory associate for Africa. In 1957, four of the six signatories of the Rome Treaty had overseas territories, mostly in Africa. At that time, French territories were the recipients of reciprocal preferences within a privileged market, protected by a common monetary zone guaranteed by the French franc. Progressively, French aid to the colonies placed a huge burden on the French Treasury. The necessary but costly modernisation of the colonies and the *métropole* can explain why France instigated the so-called ‘particular relationship’ between Europe and Africa. In fact, France simply laid down the association regime as a *conditio sine qua non* for the ratification of the Rome Treaty. According to Gaston Defferre – the French Minister for overseas territories – the costs of the French colonies were so great that ‘a symbiosis between the two processes of integration’ became necessary and led to ‘the idea of a Eurafrikan market’ (quoted in Schreurs, 1994: 83). Even if the association regime did not make sense for each of the EC member states (such as Germany and the Netherlands), the concept of EurAfrica started to develop from that moment and was seen as an equitable partnership which was going to promote African economic and social development. According to Senghor it was ‘an idealised vision of Eurafrikan cooperation, yet underlying it was essentially the same rationale that appealed to the Europeans: it was a way of creating a third force on world politics capable of resisting the hegemony of the superpowers’ (Chazan *et al.*, 1992: 387). Then, in the 1950s, Africa was seen as the neces-

sary opening of Europe towards the world. From the very beginning of the negotiation process, France refused to choose between 'divorce and bigamy' (Delorme, 1972). Using that metaphor, one could say that France wanted to conclude a marriage contract with Europe, as long as this contract took into account its existing spouse. 'France has multilateralised its aid and preferential trade relations through the treaty of Rome' (Zartman, 1993: 4). That is true to the extent that only a part of the relations was multilateralised: France shared economic costs but not political influence over Africa.

French interests and arguments

In the late 1950s, France no longer had sufficient means for its external ambitions. The strong economic links that existed between the European colonial powers and their territories could not be denied at the very moment when European countries were negotiating the sharing of their resources and harmonisation of economic policies, which also affected overseas territories' markets and products. Although political and symbolic arguments already existed when the association regime was negotiated, one has to bear in mind that in 1957 African countries were still colonies and the question of France's influence over them was not at stake. This issue rose in priority as soon as the colonies got independence. The return of de Gaulle and the development of a policy of independence for France on the international scene contributed to a refocusing of interests from economic to political matters. So when the EEC Treaty was under negotiation, French interests were mainly economic. Stating that France was a net recipient of its involvement in the African colonies would be simplistic. Trade relations between the territories and France were organised along with the capacities of the former to satisfy the needs of the latter. The colonial pact was constituted by trade and financial links which guaranteed the economic balance of the empire.

In 1957, the debate between profits and losses generated by the colonies was not solved. French politicians were aware that the colonies brought about heavy costs. Nevertheless, they were not convinced that leaving them was a good choice, strategically speaking. Archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs reflect the preoccupations of the EEC Treaty negotiators: France would enter the common market only if its colonies were included. One of the main ideas was that the European project looked very much like the French association model: 'The links between France and the overseas territories are constituted by the two fundamental aspects which are under consideration in the European project: a free trade area which implements free circulation of goods, services, capital and people, and duty free imports within the Community which triggers a system of reciprocal preferences' (French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Archives, 1956). The same document even stated that the *Union Française* was a more achieved model than the European one because members

of the Franco-African community shared a common currency. There were three major French objectives. Firstly, achieving a non-discriminatory economic relationship between Europe and associated territories. Secondly, strengthening the institutional and economic cohesion of the *Union Française* through the spillover effect generated by the creation of the common market. And thirdly, compatibility with the GATT rules (Schreurs, 1994). The bargaining base was a European financial involvement against access to the African market for the EC member states, under certain conditions.

To summarise briefly the relationship between France and Africa is no easy task. The links between the two are not only economic but can also be qualified as historical, privileged and political. They have even been labelled as blood ties but are also considered neo-colonial, personalised, clientelist, constraining and costly. One could specifically mention the 'diplomacy of affection' and the 'imaginary family links' here (Constantin, 1993). The search for independence and the preservation of France's status as a great power is a *leitmotiv* in French foreign policy. The African *pré carré*, a military presence on the continent and the CFA (Communauté Financière Africaine) franc zone serve its ambitions. A strong position in the UN, the defence of *la Francophonie* and the claim to be the advocate of the Third World contribute to the appearance of France in the world. Moreover, 'French policy towards Africa is best understood as one of the most important components of France's claim to middle power or mini-superpower status (together with its independent nuclear arsenal and its efforts to play a leading role in promoting European integration) and of its determination to pursue an independent and active foreign policy' (Ravenhill, 1995: 106).

It has often been said that the French organisation of cooperation with Africa settled by de Gaulle's administration at the time of decolonisation was a means to leave in order better to stay. France did whatever was possible to preserve economic and political links such as military positions with its former colonies, most of which were demanding this type of assistance. It seems legitimate to ask whether links with newly independent African countries were preserved as a means to help that continent, as an element of foreign policy or to serve French interests. One could say that all factors apply and this can explain why France was the main defender of the renewal of the association.

From a granted association to a negotiated association

Decolonisation implied a change in the association regime for the newly independent African countries. To convince the reluctant member states to maintain the substance of the association regime after 1960, France argued that the association was primarily a solution for OCTs exports and development problems, and was not serving a political purpose. The EEC Council decided to perpetuate the agreement until 1962. The French idea of a Euro-African

group which could serve both European and developing countries' interests survived after the independence of the associates. As the Netherlands and Germany considered the first association to be a transitional period, they were opposed to a renewal of the partnership. France, Belgium and the Commission were in favour. African countries insisted on their homogeneity as a group, their economic weakness and the responsibility of colonial powers. They expressed their will to maintain the association. Then, 'Yaoundé I de facto multilateralised the existing regime between the EEC and former colonies while maintaining intact the aid system that had been set up by the Treaty of Rome' (Grilli, 1993: 20). This Convention indeed embodied the institutionalisation of the association regime.

In 1963, France was the only member state that opposed the accession of Great Britain to the EEC, at least until the UK reorganised its economy. The disappointment of Germany and the Netherlands was strengthened by the failure to enlarge the association to Nigeria and the East African Community. Negotiations occurred but some member states did not ratify the agreements. Moreover, despite the non-discrimination principle, the first Yaoundé Convention did not succeed in setting up real equality between member states in the repartition of financial and technical cooperation markets. French industries and companies kept on obtaining the majority of EDF-related work in the associate states (Delorme, 1972: 209). During the whole Yaoundé period, member states confronted the diverging opinions about the future of the association. The Netherlands wanted to suppress both the trade and aid parts and to establish a world-wide system of development assistance. On the other hand, France fought to preserve the privileged relation with African associates. France was not opposed to the coexistence of two systems of preferences, as long as the AAMS remained privileged as compared with other developing countries (Delorme, 1972: 207). The second Yaoundé Convention resulted from a compromise between globalists and regionalists. Reciprocal concessions were made between the two European camps, to the detriment of the associates.

As seen in the first part of this chapter, France has heavily contributed to maintaining geographical coherence among the recipients of Lomé/Cotonou aid and the specific relationship with Africa. The argument that the Lomé Convention perpetuated the colonial relationship – generally justified – has always been used by opponents of the French model of European development policy. During the first fifteen years of Lomé, no adaptation of the Lomé model was proposed. ACP countries as much as European countries continued to benefit from the system without trying to improve it, despite identified limits and problems. All participants found the game profitable but instead of sharing common interests, Europe at one side and the ACP at the other progressively started to perpetuate the Convention for their own interests. The spirit of Lomé moved slightly and European development cooperation entered a ten-year period of deep mutation.

Changing context, changing interests

The 1990s were characterised by dramatic changes in the world. With the end of the Cold War and the acceleration of globalisation, North–South relationships were reshaped on several levels. Multilateral institutions played a greater role, the ACP was economically marginalised. Europe and France had to reset their priorities and to reform their cooperation system. Many factors can explain the rising disinterest of France towards Africa, both bilaterally and through the European channel.

Upheavals on the world scene

Many changes have taken place since 1975, economically as well as politically. The New International Economic Order did not become the way to rule the world economy. As for interdependence between developed and developing countries, what is left is a one-way dependence of the Third World countries on the industrialised ones. One of the core concepts of the Lomé Convention has thus disappeared. The limits of the Lomé trade model have been heavily analysed. Non-reciprocal trade preferences did not really benefit the ACP countries, except for a very small number of countries such as Mauritius. The ACP's share of international trade declined from 3 per cent in the middle of the 1970s to 1.5 per cent in the 1990s, despite an increase in the number of ACP countries. In other words, the EU's privileged partners suffer from the 'unimportance of being preferred' (Davenport, 1992: 233). Non-ACP developing countries that only benefit from the Generalised System of Preferences, less advantageous than the Lomé regime, managed to maintain or even to increase their share of European trade. The economic situation of the ACP could even have been worse without trade preferences. Whether true or not, that marginal result cannot be satisfactory.

Along with bad trade performances, the debt problem has been on the rise for many ACP countries. African states increasingly had to conclude agreements with the international financial institutions (IFIs) in order to get loans. These loans have been more and more subjected to strong economic conditionalities, including reform of their economies, control of expenses and implementation of sound macroeconomic policies. Instead of trying to formulate an alternative model to the 'Washington consensus', the European Union and the member states have progressively aligned their policies according to the approach of the IFIs (see chapter 2). If the effects of structural adjustment were criticised, the rationale of the programme itself has not been contested. As for France, in 1993 then French Prime Minister Edouard Balladur announced the so-called 'Abdijan doctrine'. This entailed that, from that moment onwards, any new French loan was conditioned to a prior agreement with the IMF or the World Bank. French-speaking African countries were among the last to sign Structural Adjustment Programmes with the IFIs because previously they were protected within the frame of the Franc zone.

The Abidjan doctrine necessarily implied the devaluation of the CFA franc, which occurred in 1994 (Lelart, 1998: 203).

The fall of the Berlin Wall also had a fundamental impact on development issues. Consequences are manifold, both for Europe and Africa. The situation described earlier (about the French imperatives) had one fundamental precondition: Germany could not reunify and become more powerful than France within the EU (Hoffmann, 1993). As for the ACP countries, especially the African ones, they suddenly lost the bargaining power they could use when two opposite blocs were leading the world. African countries were no longer the object of international attention, they ceased being a field for peripheral East–West conflicts and they lost a geo-strategic rent. As for Europe, it is commonly believed that the EU was unable to fill the vacuum when Soviet ideology disappeared. The European Union showed its limits as an achieved political body and could not offer a distinct position from the dominant American model. As long as the bipolar world existed, Europe was seen as (and tried to be) the champion of the Third World, a politically neutral partner which could offer an alternative to communism and liberalism. As soon as the Wall fell, the EU did nothing more than align itself with the dominant thought. The same thing happened with France, which considered itself as the advocate of developing countries and as an alternative model. For France ‘being anti-Americanist or anti-communist appear less as *a priori* ideological positions than as a rational attitude chosen in order to let France best maintain its international role’ (Touraine, 1993: 808). This French position was only defensible until one of the two adversaries disappeared.

The shift to the Euro in 1999 generated a debate about the status of the CFA franc. This currency had been pegged to the French franc since 1948. France had to convince its European partners of the Euro zone that the link between French and CFA francs is a budgetary arrangement and not a monetary agreement. On 23 November 1998, the Council of the EU gave a positive opinion (through decision 98/683/CE) stipulating that France could maintain these agreements. Technically speaking, the French Treasury is still guaranteeing free convertibility, fixed parity and centralised management. It was important for France that the launching of the Euro would not modify the bilateral dimension of the relationship between Franc zone countries and France. However, the monetary cooperation is extended to the European Union, which replaces France as an ‘agency of restraint’ (Collier *et al.*, 1997: 301). Franc zone countries were more interested than Europe in the future of their monetary link with France. For Europe, ‘this question was a very small issue within the whole debate about the Euro’ (personal communication, 2000b).

New European concerns for Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC) contributed to a reorientation of aid. European priorities are not strategically defined but reflect answers to ad hoc situations. Along with a massive amount of aid for the CEEC, the EU re-launched a big development and cooperation programme with the Mediterranean countries in an attempt to strengthen

their security and to stabilise the area. Two kinds of reaction can be distinguished about the French attitude towards the relative withdrawal of Europe from Africa. Firstly, France agreed with Europe. It became conscious that, rather than in Africa, new political and economic opportunities are elsewhere. At the Community level, France is more interested in issues such as enlargement, structural funds, Common Foreign and Security Policy, Common Agricultural Policy, reform of the European institutions, the Euro, and so on. Priorities are more in economy and internal issues than in development policy. Secondly, France considers its involvement in Africa still to be useful for its political image, as well as for the economic interests of French private companies, and because of a solidarity based on history. It therefore tries to limit the total disinterest in, and disillusion of, some EU member states about the Lomé Conventions, mainly through keeping up its contribution to the EDF and defending the renewal of the Lomé Convention, despite the critics and the unwillingness of other member states to remain in a regional framework.

The place of France within the post-Lomé negotiations

During the post-Lomé negotiations, France no longer played the role of *the guarantor* of the Convention. It remained one of its defenders because 'the Lomé Convention conveys a European model of development cooperation, largely inspired by France' (Khoury, 2000: 2). The position of France evolved around the preservation of a specific global agreement and a different trade regime with the ACP countries. France defended the regional-based approach designed by the Commission in order to create Regional Economic Partnership Agreements. France wanted to avoid the standardisation of the EU-ACP relationship. 'For the French, the most important issue of the negotiations was trade. We were tempted to be more flexible on political issues as long as we could get more about this specific trade regime' (personal communication, 2000c). According to the Commission proposals, France also defended the creation of an environment that favours investment and economic growth (Secrétariat Général de l'Union Européenne, 1997; Posthumus, 1998) and the idea of creating an inter-African peace-keeping corps. Recognising the progressive alignment of the EU to the model shaped by the IFIs, France has been attempting to formulate different ideas. It advocated a 'fight against inequalities' rather than a struggle against poverty. It brought out questions on structural adjustment and it considered the concept of good governance as too vague a notion. However, this criticism or distance exists in words rather than in deeds.

The EU's negotiation mandate mentioned the non-renewal of Stabex. Along with a few ACP countries benefiting from these instruments, France was the only country that really defended the mechanism. The Cotonou Agreement admits that instability in export earnings jeopardises development policies and economic reforms in ACP countries but it only gives additional support included within the financial envelope for long-term development support.

France considers that this is not adapted to one-off external shocks. The question of instability of markets is not solved in the new Agreement. France is right in arguing that this point is fundamental, but it has to be mentioned that France had a distinct interest in preserving this instrument. After all, the main recipients of the Stabex were two faithful friends of France, that is Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon.

The debate about including the EDF in the Community budget is relevant to understand France's change of attitude towards the importance of the EU-ACP relationship. The French, the Danes and the Luxemburgers contribute proportionally more to the EDF than to the Community budget. France provides 24.3 per cent of the EDF while it funds 'only' 17 per cent of the Community budget. This position as first EDF contributor gives France a certain legitimacy among both donors and recipients of aid, as well as symbolic and political power. However, France has now been converted to the idea of including the EDF in the Community budget and tries to convince its reluctant partners. One can ask if France now thinks that, compared to its high financial involvement in the EU-ACP partnership, political feedback is insufficient. It appears that the economic rationale defended by the Ministry of Economy and Finances carries off the philosophy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This example shows that French internal divergences have an impact on the definition of France's official position towards European policy. In the Cotonou Agreement, the EDF is still based on state contributions but France has officially asked DG DEV to study inclusion of the fund in the Community budget.

Reform of the European and French development policies

The point here is not to describe the reform processes of development policy in France and in Europe, but to explain how these changes will modify the role of France within EU development policy. The making of French African policy is a multi-polar and multilevel exercise. There are roles for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Economy and Finances, the Treasury, some technical ministries, the AFD (French Development Agency), the SGCI (General Secretariat for Inter-ministerial Coordination), the African cell of the Presidency, some French private companies, civil society at large, public opinion, NGOs, and others. French cooperation is a galaxy, an institutional nebula. As far as development policy is concerned, France consists of 'a multiplicity of decision centres which do not work in cooperation with each other, in harmony' (Bayart, 1983: 13). This complexity favoured personal links between African and French actors and one of the main characteristics of French cooperation has long been lack of transparency. The necessary reform process has been going on since 1998. The reform pursues more coherence, transparency in policies and better coordination with other bilateral and multilateral donors. It also aims at restoring the credibility of France in Africa, democratising the African policy, reforming aid and associating civil society actors.

The French Ministry of Development Cooperation has been amalgamated within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Many observers and actors (both from France and the Commission) state that the already decreasing presence of France in the international and European debate on cooperation is even more pronounced since the Ministry of Development Cooperation disappeared. The dilution of responsibility in Paris does not favour influence on the elaboration of European strategies. Until recently, every great European development policy was inspired by France. Today, the thought about development is Anglo-Saxon. According to a former Director-General at the Commission, 'every French civil servant in Brussels can confirm the decrease in the French presence' (HCCI, 2000). The bi-polarisation between the Ministry of Economy (which manages more than half of the cooperation budget) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could jeopardise the future of development policy. How could international cooperation maintain a degree of autonomy if it is torn between budgetary constraints and diplomatic considerations? The recent heavy cut in French bilateral ODA contributes to the trend of normalising France among the other donors and can de-legitimize the leading role of France. Moreover, French MEPs no longer contribute to conveying French ideas. For example, the Development and Cooperation Committee is no longer chaired by well-known French politicians such as Bernard Kouchner and Michel Rocard.

The new-born Haut Conseil de la Coopération Internationale is expected to fill the gap between the authorities and civil society, as 'French policymakers have long tended to forget that this second world exists' (Brüne, 1994: 56). This institution includes representatives from NGOs, MPs, trade unions, researchers and actors of decentralised cooperation and contributes to the making of development cooperation policy. To enlarge the traditional privileged *champ*, a 'zone of prior solidarity' has been created. It mainly covers the ACP group as a whole, which reflects the search for more coordination and coherence between the Commission and France. They are both trying to lose the image of post-colonial paternalism which has characterised Franco-African relations and influenced the European development policy.

The geographical division of aid zones in the Community organisation of development cooperation is a fundamental element in the relation between France, Europe and Africa. Until recently, the European administrative hard core of this work was DG VIII. This structure began with managing the Community's aid and trade relations with member states' former colonies. This field of action was under negotiation every time that enlargement of the EU introduced the problem of the candidate's former colonies, which were supposed to join the other recipients of European aid. The geographical organisation of the Commission's external relations has now gradually shifted towards a thematic framework: DG External Relations, DG Trade, DG Enlargement, DG Development, ECHO and EuropeAid compose 'the RELEX group'. As for the reform of development policy within the European Commission, a recent assessment document concluded that (1) the reform of the RELEX group was seen as an

'urgent and vital priority'; (2) 'the overall policy direction seems quite logical and coherent'; (3) 'implementation will be the real test', and (4) 'some critical dimensions merit greater attention'. The document recommends to Europe to develop 'its own specificity as a global player and donor' (Bossuyt *et al.*, 2000: 28–30). When one uses the words 'Europe' and 'Commission', the same kind of analysis as for France can be made about where and by whom European development policy is elaborated. There are a lot of diverging positions within the member states, and there is some incoherence between certain Community sector-related policies. The Commission has to organise a minimum consensus. Some actors say that the Commission only results from the will of the fifteen EU member states (personal communication, 2000d). Others state that it cannot be denied that the Commission produces thoughts on its own.

The current reforms in France and Europe show some parallels in major themes as well as in cooperation mechanisms. This common vision is perceptible through new matters and objectives such as the integration of developing countries in the world economy, regional integration and the fight against poverty. These principles constitute the European development policy aims as included in the Maastricht Treaty. French and European development cooperation have to face decreasing aid budgets and new priorities in development matters. Africa's position as Europe's and France's privileged partner is challenged by new concerns for the near-abroad. French and European official positions about development use the same wording and concepts: rationalisation of technical and financial cooperation instruments, governance, ownership, efficiency, profitability, private sector, competitiveness, regionalism, trade *and* aid approach. This convergence should be interpreted as a standardisation more than a revival of the EU–ACP relationship.

The French position on European development policy is both supportive and critical at the same time. France strongly supports the principle of European development cooperation but criticises methods and results. France calls for more coordination and complementarity with member states, asks for better aid efficiency and serious evaluation. It proposes to strengthen sector-related coherence and to improve Community procedures (CICID, 2000). Many French official reports advocate strict application of the principle of subsidiarity: the EC should limit its action to fields where it can offer value added. In other sectors, implementation of Community aid should be delegated to a member state when it is a leader in the sector involved (Tavernier, 1999; CICID, 2000). This idea of *chefs de file* already exists within the framework of operational coordination between the EU delegations and member states' agencies in the field (personal communication, 2000e). The Commission has recently accepted the principle of a division of labour between itself and the member states (CEC, 2000; Nielson, 2000). This example shows that France has not lost all the influence on policy making that it used to have. Nevertheless, the whole statement shows that the French position within Europe is now more or

less standardised compared with the other European Union member states and compared with what it used to be.

Conclusion

It cannot be denied that France played a great role in shaping a development policy model for the European Community, and that it lost a large part of its influence along with successive enlargements of the Community and the choice of other national and European priorities. French disengagement from Africa is firstly occurring at a bilateral level: by military withdrawal, decrease in ODA and normalisation of the political relationship. One could have expected this disengagement to be compensated by a stronger involvement in Community development policy. But the combination of two types of factor limits the role of France in European development policy towards Africa. There are 'objective factors' (such as enlargement of the EU to member states which do not agree with the French geographical approach to development, new priorities and partners, the dominant role of the IFIs) and 'French factors' (such as the will to budgetise the EDF and reduce its own contribution, weak presence in the European and international debate on development, decreasing human investment in and impact on the Commission).

It seems that France, at the end of the twentieth century, has chosen sense rather than sensibility. A study of the main themes within Mitterrand's public addresses showed that 'Europe' progressively gained importance. Constructing Europe was Mitterrand's main preoccupation, above all during his second mandate as President. Comparatively, 'Africa' was not a fundamental item in his speeches on French foreign policy (Labbé, 1990). Two quotes can further illustrate the feeling of sense overriding sensibility. At the end of his second mandate, President Mitterrand stated: 'Never separate French greatness from the construction of Europe. This is our new dimension and our ambition for the next century.' Secondly: 'In the past, France was an imperial nation, exercising influence over the Mediterranean and Africa, and having world-wide dreams. Nowadays, and above all thanks to its economy (trade, investments, industrial and scientific cooperation), France is essentially European' (Moreau-Desfarges, 1994: 70). It seems difficult to imagine that France could or would wish to make Africa a priority for Europe as long as it is not one of its own priorities.

Note

- 1 This research builds on participant observation, carried out through: a five-month internship at the Post-Lomé Negotiation Task Force of the Commission's DG VIII (October 1998–February 1999); participation in the work of the French High Council for International Cooperation on coherence between bilateral and

multilateral development policies (1999–2002); and interviews with French and European Commission civil servants.

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